METRO / A19

10-year-old girl killed, 6 other youngsters hurt in carnival ride accident in Marikina City

BUSINESS / B1

Zest-O in talks to buy Dubai-based firm

NEWS / A4

Palace on Smith custody battle: Nothing to do but wait

WORLD / A22

Mao: A monster or an authentic Chinese hero?

Powerful Taiwan quake stirs tsunami alert in RP

By the Inquirer staff

A POWERFUL EARTHQUAKE STRUCK OFF southwestern Taiwan on Tuesday, triggering a potentially destructive tsunami that Japanese scientists said was headed toward the Philippines but Filipino officials said last night no tsunami had hit the country.

The tsunami alert occurred as the second an-

POWERFUL / A2

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Wednesday, Dec[illegible] 4 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 19 P18 [illegible]

UN okays RP proposal vs global poverty–JDV

THE PHILIPPINE PROPOSAL FOR A GLOBAL debt-for-equity plan to finance the anti-poverty programs of the United Nations won the unanimous approval of the General Assembly on Dec. 22, Speaker Jose de Venecia announced yesterday.

In a statement sent from the UN headquarters in New York, De Venecia said the plan, if adopted by creditor countries, would convert half of the

UN COUNTS BY / A3

CHRISTMAS DAY FIRE. Firemen and police investigators sift through the ashes of a one-story department store in Ormoc City one day after a killer fire razed through the establishment. AP

Christmas inferno kills 24

Get killers of activists, CPP orders NPA rebels

THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF the Philippines yesterday reversed its order to its armed wing, the New People's Army, to go after military and police forces it believed were behind the killings of activists.

On its 36th founding anniversary, the CPP said in a statement posted on its website that the NPA should attack revolutionary justice for all the victims of "state terrorism."

The statement did not identify targets by name, but described the Cabinet oversight committee in charge of national security as the "director" of the attacks against activists.

The CPP said the Cabinet committee's special operations teams and death squads were behind the spate of extrajudicial killings.

"(The NPA should) form teams with the determination and skills and choose the time and place for arresting the criminals and bringing them to justice or for giving battle to those who are well-armed and cannot be peaceably arrested," the CPP said.

It said "the best time to arrest or give battle to the motorcades of the Arroyo regime is when they are already in a state of rapid political decline."

NEW COMM A-11

Boy with firecracker ignites blaze at Ormoc dep't store

By Joey A. Gabieta
Inquirer Visayas

ORMOC CITY—A FIRECRACKER LIT BY A CHILD ignited a pile of fireworks on display at a department store in Ormoc City in Leyte, turning Christmas Day into an inferno.

At least 24 people—shoppers, vendors and store employees—were killed and 22 others were injured in the fire that burned down the Uniliop store.

Police said people near the entrance managed to escape but others fled deeper and ran into a bathroom, where 23 bodies were later found. Many of them were believed to have suffocated.

A dramatic footage on ABC television showed an unidentified woman looking trapped on the roof of the burning building. Then, fearing the heat and the smoke, she clambered onto the roof of a nearby building to save herself.

Survivors and bystanders said they could hear people screaming "Fire, fire" as flames swallowed up the one-story building.

Two of those killed were infants only a few months old.

Police said the exit door at the back of the store was padlocked, blocking the escape route, according to The Associated Press.

Firemen later broke the lock, enabling some of the trapped people to get out.

Survivors said the store was filled with shoppers when the fire broke out at around 4:40 p.m.

Thinking the explosions from

CHRISTMAS A6

Survivors remember killer tsunami

BALI, INDONESIA—THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE FLED beaches in Indonesia's largest-ever tsunami drill yesterday as nations across Asia remembered the moment two years ago when devastating waves crashed into coastlines and killed 230,000 people.

Elsewhere, survivors and mourners visited mass graves, lit candles along beaches, observed a moment of silence and erected warning towers in hopes of saving lives in the future.

But as Thai authorities prepared to open a cemetery for unidentified tsunami victims, foreign donors alleged that nearly a million dollars intended for DNA sampling and other testing appeared to have been misused.

The magnitude 9.0 earthquake that ripped apart the ocean floor off Indonesia's Sumatra island on Dec. 26, 2004, spawned giant waves that fanned out across the Indian Ocean at jetliner speeds, killing people in a dozen countries and leaving millions homeless.

Entire villages were swept to sea in Indonesia and Sri Lanka, luxury resorts and fishing communities submerged in Thailand and thousands of homes destroyed in southern India—where communications were small and subdued.

SURVIVORS A6

A MAN on motorcycle rides past a fishing boat still stranded on top of houses in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, on Tuesday, two years after a tsunami pulverized villages facing the Indian Ocean and killed 230,000 people. REUTERS

Murdered Abra lawmaker buried today

DOJ places governor on hold departure order list

By Leonelo Bolbie Jr. and Frank Cimatu
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BANGUED, ABRA—THE PHILIPpine National Police has deployed its Special Action Force to secure this Abra capital today for the burial of Rep. Luis Bersamin Jr., PNP Director General Oscar Calderon announced yesterday.

Calderon reviewed the peace and order situation in the river-wrenched province and arrangements for the burial of Bersamin, 62, who was gunned down on Dec. 16 outside Mt. Carmel Church in Quezon City, along with his police bodyguard, Adolfo Ortega, 49.

The 100-strong special PNP force will be reinforced by the Cordillera police mobile group, Calderon said. Checkpoints will also be set up in the capital.

"We want the PNP to be very visible," he said.

Calderon met with members of Bersamin's family yesterday and gave his assurance that the PNP would give them security escorts even after the May elections next year.

Thousands of Abra residents are expected to attend Bersamin's burial at 7 a.m. today said the lawmaker's eldest daughter Charlie Bersamin. "We are satisfied with General Calderon's assurance of safety for us and the people," she said.

In Manila, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez announced that a hold departure order had been issued against Abra Gov. Vicente Valera, 61, who was implicated in Bersamin's murder by former Army M/Sgt. Rufino Pandoy.

Pandoy, 63, an Abra native, was arrested on Dec. 19 in his Makati City residence. He confessed he had acted as lookout during the assassination, which he said was carried out by four other men.

They included former La Paz, Abra, Vice Mayor Freddie Dupo, who Pandoy said had told him that Valera was the brains behind

MURDERED A6

Aging pets work out in gyms, unwind with hot spa, massage

TOKYO—HE MAY BE AN OLD dog, but he's family.

Andy has upward-white whiskers, stiffen from lower back pain and no longer bounds up the stairs like he used to.

Still, the 11-year-old Shetland hunky isn't lying idle. Every week, he meets his personal trainer for a run on an underwater treadmill, does laps in a doggy pool to strengthen his

AGING PETS A9

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2008

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Southern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will have mostly fair weather (partly cloudy). The rest of the country will get it cloudy, in certain areas with isolated thunderstorms and localized floods.

Second FRONTPAGE

Gov't will take less for PLDT stake

ANOTHER INSPECTION

President Macapagal-Arroyo inspects the Cebu International Convention Center upon her arrival from Manila. The venue is the site of the once-postponed summit of the Association of Southeast Asian leaders and Chief Exec. Rulon counterpart to. Ms Arroyo is accompanied by Tourism Secretary Ace Durano (left), Cebu City Rep. Antonio Cuenco (in dark glasses) and Cebu Gov. Gwen Garcia.

By Dax-Ivy L. Lucas

THE GOVERNMENT WAS WILLING TO ACCEPT even less than the P25.2 billion it is set to receive for its stake in the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. because the block is not attractive enough to potential buyers.

"We were ready to accept the fact that the price would really be low," explained commissioner Alexander Aldaba of the Presidential Commission on Good Government amid accusations by Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. that the PCGG had sold its sequestered shares in the Philippine Telecommunications Investment Corp. (PTIC) at a "scandalous and irregular" price.

The shares of stock of PTIC, which owns a stake in telecom giant PLDT, are registered under the name of Prime Holdings Inc., an offshore company formed by the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

In January the Supreme Court ruled that 111,435 sequestered PTIC shares were part of the Marcos ill-gotten wealth and ordered them forfeited in favor of the government.

Last week, the Sandiganbayan antigraft court awarded the shares to the government and ordered the PTIC to cancel the shares registered in the name of PNB and issue new certificates in the name of the Republic of the Philippines.

'Small minority'

Aldaba pointed out that the administration of the government's stake in PTIC was hobbled by the fact that it represents only a "small minority" in PLDT.

The 111,435 shares represent ownership of close to seven percent in the telecommunications which used to be a telecommunications monopoly during Marcos' rule.

Anywhere you go, a minority [stake] will always be worth less," said Aldaba.

He said the PCGG's pursuit of an attractive price was hindered even more by the shares representing only an indirect stake in PLDT.

This was further aggravated by the fact that PLDT's majority owners, Hong Kong-based First Pacific Co. Inc. holds the "right of first refusal" over the government shares. This allows First Pacific to buy the shares by merely matching the bid made by any third party interested to invest in buying into telecommunications giant.

Wrong computation

First Pacific is close to clinching the deal for the PTIC shares, having vowed to match the highest bid of P25.2 billion from Metro Pacific Investments Corp. and Pacific Equity Fund (MPIC-PEF).

Pimentel also claimed that no public bidding took place on the sale of the shares, and that "certain parties" may have manipulated the process to enable First Pacific and its Japanese partner NTT DOCOMO to purchase the shares at a discount.

Because of this, the government stands to lose anywhere between P6 billion and P17 billion on the deal, Pimentel claimed.

But the congressman's estimations were apparently based on the price of PLDT, not PTIC, shares as the Philippine Stock Exchange list of the most PLDT@250 per share.

Aldaba denied any wrongdoing on the government's part or collusion with any other party to favor the bid of First Pacific.

"Everything about [the bidding] is transparent," he said, explaining that even First Pacific merely must meet the P25.2 billion bid of Pacific, as the rules allowed them to do.

"This is not a first sale or a second-hand deal," he said.

He said First Pacific, owned by the Salim family of Indonesia and represented locally by PLDT chair Manuel V. Pangilinan, merely wanted to consolidate its hold on the company.

GMA cites resiliency of Guinsaugon

By Jaime B. Bulambot and Jeni Arnaiz, Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—HAVING SURVIVED the pain of losing their loved ones, the Guinsaugon survivors could become a source of inspiration for victims of the flood landslides, President Macapagal-Arroyo said here yesterday.

Speaking at the inauguration of the Sarah Duterte Pediatrics edifice here, Ms Arroyo noted that the people of Guinsaugon, St. Bernard in Southern Leyte have overcome the tragic event that claimed the lives of their loved ones.

"It is an inspiration [to those who are suffering now in flood locations, after nine months from the tragedy they've already back on their feet," she pointed out.

The President was scheduled Tuesday to visit St. Bernard to witness the turnover of 222 housing units in the New Guinsaugon village in Barangay Magbagacay but the visit was canceled due to heavy rains in the area.

"We thank God because of the early recovery of the people of Southern Leyte, Guinsaugon and Ormoc," Ms Arroyo said in her video message to the residents of Guinsaugon.

She also thanked the donors who helped the victims of the tragedy.

The beneficiaries of the housing units, government officials and employees, lined up along the route of the President despite the heavy downpour.

The beneficiaries are surviving family members of the mudslide on Feb. 16, after a portion of Mt. Kanlaog collapsed and submerged nine villages of mud, burying alive at least 2,000 people in Guinsaugon. Only 900 bodies were recovered while about a thousand others, including some 200 school children attending classes at the local public elementary school, remained missing and considered dead.

The President was also scheduled to inaugurate, with Legarda-Leviste Tan, the school buildings, health and day care centers and other facilities donated by the Federation of Filipino Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FFCCI), Davao Investment Association of Taiwan, the Japanese and Australian governments.

The other scheduled activities include the anniversary celebration of the housing units for the 251 families displaced by landslides in Western Island.

At 10 minutes past 11 a.m., Ms. Arroyo's trip cancellation was announced. Leyte solon called the President on her mobile phone and asked Ms. Arroyo to give a message.

In her speech at the inauguration of the Ormoc-Cebu office, the President also expressed optimism over the country's prospects in 2009.

"We will surely greet the New Year with another strong start with our economy as we share optimism and hope for the united Philippines," she said.

Ms. Arroyo vowed that the government would ensure that people would be able to reap the gains of the strong economy in 2007.

"Now you will be the time to drive our economic gains deeper to the grassroots so we can make smart strategic headway against poverty and unemployment and improve the climate of law and order in the cities and countryside, rehabilitate our calamity-stricken communities and go on as people-built on the platform of enterprise," said the President.

GMA asked to sign poll automation bill

By TJ Burgonio

GORDON

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO should sign into law the Congress-approved legislation seeking to automate the election system to show her commitment to credible elections, beginning with the May 2007 polls, according to Sen. Richard Gordon.

"She has to sign it. She will be seen as insincere [if she doesn't]," said Gordon, the chair of the Senate committee on constitutional amendments and the main author of the Senate version of the bill.

"She can't turn her back now. She certified this bill," he said in a phone interview.

Gordon warned that if the bill is not enacted into law, it would fuel suspicions that the administration was planning to cheat in next year's elections.

He said that contrary to claims by election officials, there would be ample time to implement the partial automation of selected provinces and cities in May with a wide range of technology available in both domestic and foreign markets.

No enthusiasm

The senator was dismayed at the President's seeming lack of enthusiasm to sign the bill, which she had certified as urgent, and which Congress ratified way before it went on holiday break last week.

"I'm puzzled why she has not acted on this measure, which is part of her 10-point agenda. When we passed this measure, I didn't hear her say 'I'm glad we're going to have automated elections.' She should have signed it right away. It will boost her credibility," he said.

In the absence of such a law (for months before the scheduled election), Gordon chair Benjamin Abalos (at 6) has declared it was no longer possible to automate the election, a view that was shared by election lawyer Romulo Macalintal and his political rival, the late Fernando Poe Jr.

Abalos said what might be viable was the electronic transmission of election results, but not the voting and the counting.

The House and the Senate ratified the measure last Dec. 7 which authorizes the partial automation of elections in the provinces and the highly urbanized cities in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao in 2009, and full automation in 2010.

The proposed law seeks to amend and repeal the scope of the current automation law, Republic Act 8436, by authorizing the use of an AES (automated election system) in the voting, counting, consolidation, canvassing and transmission of results and other electoral processes.

Gordon said there was no sense of urgency on the part of the administration about enacting this measure, "and I can only surmise that some people may still want a cheated election."

He said the estimated 1 to 2 million votes to be cast in the plebiscite of six provinces and six cities to partially automate election next is large that those could affect the final tally in a closely-contested vote.

Fool-proof

"That can't be cheated. And it will be crucial in the senatorial and congressional elections," he said.

He said this could shape the political configurations in the Senate and House of Representatives in the next Congress, which would "affect concerns on impeachment, Charter change and everything else."

As to Abalos' claim about lack of time, the senator said the government could lease the paper-based ballots technology that was used in the recent OSY elections.

"It can be done. There's still time, we only need to change the names of the candidates in the machines. You can use different machines for every province. This is just partial automation, not the whole country," he said.

Army chief unhurt as plane loses brakes

By Nikko Dizon and Donna Z. Pazzibugan

A LIGHT MILITARY AIRCRAFT carrying the Philippine Army chief and two colonels lost its brakes shortly before taking off at the Sinsay Sapiao International Airport (Sisia).

But Lt. Gen. Ramon Tolentino, Philippine Army commanding general, and his companions, Col. Cesar Pana, 6th Infantry (spearhead) Bde. Ramon Gabol, 6th Infantry Battalion, Capt. Louie Bermudez, aide de camp, and Chief M/Sgt. Fidel Alegre, the Army sergeant major, were unhurt, according to airport officials.

Tolentino and his party were set to fly to Iloilo to visit Army troops engaged in relief and rehabilitation work for typhoon-ravaged areas.

The plane's pilots, Army Maj. Alex Adona and Capt. Teresito Gaay, had no shots the flight.

According to an Army statement, the Army Cessna plane had a "brake malfunction prior to take-off" at Runway 6 of the Sisia at around 7:45 a.m.

Investigation showed that while taxiing, the six-seater Cessna 421B (RP-C421) owned by the Philippine Army experienced a braking system problem and stopped at the E-2 area.

An incident report from the airport authority said that at 7:50 a.m., the Manila Control Tower requested for assistance from the safety patrollers the stalled aircraft on the E-2 area of the runway.

The aircraft had to be manually towed. But the incident did not cause any flight delays at the Sisia.

Army spokesperson Maj. Ernesto Torres Jr. said Tolentino, the two staff colonels and his aide de camp later proceeded to the Southern Luzon Command (SolCom) headquarters in Lucena City and flew to the 9th Infantry Division headquarters in Pili, Camarines Sur on board an Air Force helicopter.

"The group of 11 (Philippine Army's) ranking general Philippine Army's) is safe and sound at the 9th Infantry headquarters," said Torres. "The purpose of the trip is to visit the army troops and to assess the relief and rehabilitation activities of the Army in the area," he added.

MUZZLED
Officers of the SWAT team of the Manila Police District put tape on the muzzle of their rifles and hand guns to prevent them from indiscriminately firing them during the holiday season.

Relatives search for missing NDF consultant

LOS BAÑOS, LAGUNA—CESAR SARRALO, a consultant for the leftist National Democratic Front, did not make it to his family's Christmas reunion in San Pablo City just south of Manila. The human rights group Karapatan believes he could be the 50th victim of "political disappearance" this year and the 200th since 2001.

Dexie Cuarto, secretary general of Karapatan in the Southern Tagalog area, said Ka Ireds is also the 19th NDF consultant to be reported missing this year, added Cuarto.

His colleagues believe he was illegally taken by military or police forces, or by the latest victim in the spate of political killings in the Philippines.

"If my brother is in (police or military) custody, they must tell us. If he has done something against the law, like any other person, he deserves a legal process," said Cora Sarralo, an elder sister of Ka Ireds.

For the police and the military in Southern Luzon have denied they have Ka Ireds, according to Sarralo and Karapatan.

Sarralo said their last correspondence was through text messages between 2:36 pm to 4 p.m. on December 23 when Ka Ireds said he was in San Ildefonso, Bicol while she was in Manila. Sarralo's daughter Kate was supposed to meet him in Manila and bring him to the family reunion.

"After that text, he did not show up and we started to worry," she said in Pilipino. "We tried to call him many times (but his phone was always unreachable)." Friends and colleagues they contacted did not know of his whereabouts.

"We spent the Christmas looking for him in various police stations and military camps but we were told they have no information about my brother," she said. They have also searched for him in hospitals and morgues.

Ninoh Isaid, Karapatan's chairperson, said he can understand the anxiety of the family. "We've been thinking of him. We feel restless and lose. Our family is really in a state of confusion."

He said they were afraid that Ka Ireds was either experiencing torture in the hands of his captors or that he was buried alive.

His family sought the help of Karapatan. *With Catharine Gallupe, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

SMITH CUSTODY BATTLE

Palace: Nothing to do but wait

By Tarra V. Quismundo and Christine O. Avendaño

MALACAÑANG, CAN DO nothing but wait for the Court of Appeals to decide the custody dispute involving a United States soldier convicted of raping a Filipina, according to Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita.

But the Executive Branch has taken the necessary steps to keep the Philippines' commitments to the United States under the Visiting Forces Agreement by arguing before the appellate court why it should allow Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith, who remains in detention at the Makati City Jail, to be transferred in US custody.

The government filed two petitions with the court last week in support of the move of Smith's lawyers questioning the US soldier's continued detention at the Makati jail.

"All we can do now is wait for developments in the CA," Ermita said in a phone interview.

The appeals court resumes sessions today after the Christmas holiday break.

Message from jail

From his detention cell yesterday, Smith sent a message of thanks to those who gave him support, helping him get through his first jailhouse Christmas.

In a handwritten letter, Smith expressed his gratitude to those who sent him gifts and treats on Christmas Day and in previous weeks.

"To all the people who took their time out to send me a card, write me a letter, or drop off a gift over these past couple of weeks. Thank you so much. These things have made the holidays a bearable time. From me and my family, thank you all and God Bless," he said.

Smith wrote the note on the 22nd day of his detention on the advice of his lawyers.

The 21-year-old Marine has gained a fan base in the Philippines, among them FR. Ignio Arroyo of 321 environment and experience, since being convicted in early December for the rape of a Filipino woman on Nov. 1, 2005.

"We (lawyers) told him that he should thank his supporters and then we will release it to the media," said lead lawyer Jose Justiniano.

'I'm innocent'

Asked how his client was coping, Justiniano quoted the soldier as saying, "How can I feel sad as some have told me. I'm being detained although I'm innocent?"

Backed by the US and Malacañang, Smith has been seeking that he be returned to US custody, citing provisions in the RPA, a treaty that stipulates legal protection for US troops engaged in joint military exercises here.

"Wrote," the Filipino who filed said was the tape case against Smith, along with her lawyers and supporters have been strongly opposed to Smith's request.

"My god, they're too much ... They do not see that he is a rapist and all they see in him is that he is a brave Black," said Wrote of Smith's growing army of supporters.

"But what will you do with someone (who's) handsome when what's on the inside is the opposite?," she said.

Nicole's fans

The 23-year-old rape victim said she had her own supporters in her US environment friends have been wishing her well since learning of the news of her victory.

"Chris Bills (the US soldier who was among those with her at an Olongapo City nightspot on the night of the rape) told me that other servicemen whom he ran into would tell him to tell Nicole that she went her fight. He told me that he is proud of me and that his friends really admire me," Nicole said.

The Office of the Solicitor General, representing the Department of Foreign Affairs, initially filed a motion to intervene in the CA, arguing that under the terms of the VFA, the US should retain custody of Smith while his case was on appeal.

The OSG followed this up with a submission, contending an "agreement" signed between Manila and Washington to which the two governments manifested their desire to have Smith returned to the custody of US authorities.

Late last week, the OSG filed an "urgent manifestation and motion" informing the CA that the US and the Philippines had agreed to designate a room in the US Embassy in Manila where Smith would be detained while his rape case was on appeal.

Inspection rights

The second agreement submitted by the Philippine National Police and the Secretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government would be granted "inspection rights" while Smith was detained at the US Embassy.

Despite these efforts by the lawyers, US officials announced last week that it was canceling next year's annual war games with the Philippines because of the Smith custody issue.

"But you know the US understands the separation of powers of the Executive and the judiciary," Ermita said in Pilipino.

Help stop int'l funding of local Reds, US urged

By Norman Bordadora

AN ANTI-COMMUNIST PEOPLE'S DELIBERATION yesterday expressed hope that the US will help the Philippine government deal with extremist-based groups that have alleged financial ties with the left-armed insurgency.

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Corrections

IN THE DEC. 23 ISSUE, a front-page story—"Sitra governor linked to ustive's murder"—misstated the time Rep. Luis "Ziltoy" Bersamin and his bodyguard were killed. The two were gunned down at 10:30 a.m., not 9:30 p.m.—not after the lawyer left for lunch.

* * *

IN THE SAME ISSUE, a front-page article—"Sitra honors, hopes for typhoon survivors"—misspelled the last name of the cartoonist who sang during the Gawad Kalinga award ceremonies in Legazpi City. The correct spelling of the cartoonist's name is Simbo Cerville—not Cerrado.

* * *

IN THE DEC. 23 ISSUE, a caption of a photo on Page B-2 accompanying a Business Monday article—"SGI 1 wants for Christmas . . ."—misspelled the surname of the president of French Bakeries Inc. The correct spelling of the company president's name is Arlette Rio—not Uzu. The name of the car company that financed SGI1Bed his Christmas wish was also misspelled in the article. The correct spelling of the car company's name is Toyota—not Toyota.

Lucia Iñigo; 88

LUCIA (NIA, ROSA-ERIG) mother of business columnist and former sports editor Manolo Iñigo and grandmother of Inquirer Opinion writer Iñigo, died yesterday morning after a heart attack. She was 88.

Mrs. Iñigo also left behind daughter Cheché Ferreras, nun Ernest and Rocho and grandchildren.

Her remains lie at the Iñigo residence in Talmig-Ilig, Marikina, Rizal. She will be buried tomorrow at the Manila Memorial Park after Mass at the San Gabriel Parish Church.

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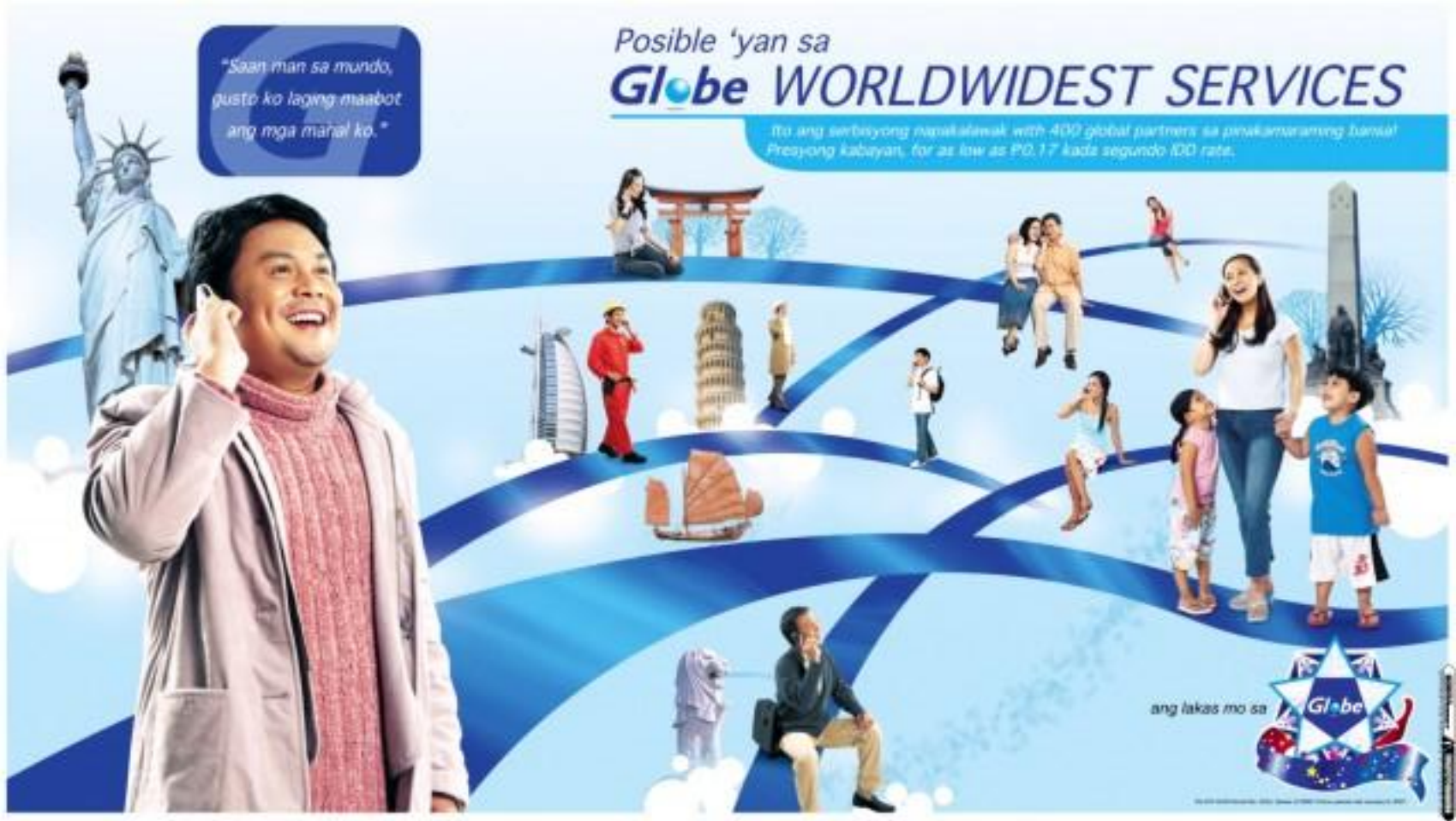
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Christmas inferno kills 24

Front page A1

the firecrackers were gunfire, some of those inside the store ran toward the rear.

The fire raged for about seven hours until it was put under control at about midnight.

The tragedy occurred despite repeated warnings from officials for people to be careful in handling fireworks, especially during the present holidays.

Possible liability

Police are investigating the possible liability of the storeowners after initial investigation indicated the owners had no authority to sell firecrackers inside the department store, Eastern Visayas police commander Chief Supt. Hermogenes Dan said the business.

It was the latest of a long list of tragedies blamed on firecrackers to hit the country during the Christmas and New Year holiday season.

On Dec. 31, 2004, seven people were killed when a fire hit a strip of firecracker stalls in Quezon, Bulacan. That blaze started when a customer asked that a "bomb-shell" be tested on buy but turned. Sparks flew from the defective item, starting the fire that ate up 14 stalls.

On Dec. 18, 1997, two workers were killed and four others suffered burns in a fire that hit an illegal firecracker factory in San Ildefonso, Bulacan.

Through the roof

Lindsay teenagers Lolito Tapnio and Emily Ocares, both 18, recount along with several others who fled to the second floor.

"One of the men grabbed a ladder and went up and kept hammering at the roof and destroyed it," said Ocares, who suffered burns.

"He shouted at us, 'Medio, kailan! (Come, now!)'"

With the others, Ocares struggled out through the roof and scampered to an adjacent building.

Ocares said she could no longer remember other details because as some point, she had fainted.

It was not immediately known if the woman shown on television was one of those in Ocares' group.

How it started

BFOI (Senior Fire Officer) Primitivo Tumilloso said some witnesses told him that the fire started when a child lit a firecracker at the inside entrance of the store.

The firecracker explosion triggered bigger blasts as pyrotechnics displayed nearby, causing an air-conditioning unit directly above to explode, according to witnesses.

This triggered the fire that engulfed the building, which used to be a warehouse.

The Office of the Mayor gave the same story.

Different version

But Ormoc police intelligence chief Senior Inspector Reynaldo Gebon gave a different story in a television interview.

He said the boy, left alone by her mother who had queued up to pay for her purchases, was playing with a toy gun when sparks flew from it and ignited the nearby firecracker on display.

"That was how it started," said Gebon.

The boy survived with bruises.

Ormoc Mayor Eric Codilla said those responsible for the incident would face punishment.

Why, why?

Si Gamalo's son is inconsolable as losing his 19-year-old daughter, Jennifer, a Ormoc salesperson. Jennifer was among the 24 who died.

"She was such a good daughter ... I don't know why this happened to her," the mother said, sobbing uncontrollably at the funeral parlor.

Jennifer, whose father works as a security guard, started working in Ormoc just a month ago to help her family, the mother said.

Amelita Lucero, 39, had much to be thankful for. She had gone to the store to buy her 6-year-old son Jerome a toy when the fire started.

A kind soul

She sustained minor injuries to her face and leg. Her boy survived.

Lucero said a kind soul pulled her and her son out from the burning building amid pandemonium.

"I am happy I have a reason to be thankful. This serves as my second life," said Lucero, who has been working at Unimo for six months.

She and other survivors were being treated at the Ormoc Sugar Planters Association hospital for minor burns and smoke inhalation.

Two of the survivors, Teresa Simon and son Aaron Bell, were in critical conditions after suffering serious burns.

The other survivors at the hospital were Daisy Gore; Mathewville Gonzales, 28; Anabelle Mejares, 36; Glen Igot, 41, and Ulva Bachani, 38.

Willing to help

Twenty-two of the 24 fatalities have been identified, Mayor Codilla said.

Codilla said the management of Unimop General Merchandise was willing to extend assistance to all the victims.

One of the owners of Unimop in Cebu, who refused to divulge his name, said the Unimop store in Ormoc had a separate management from Unimop-Cebu. The source explained that Unimop-Ormoc has an office based in Hilongos.

Asked about the store's owners, Codilla said he only knew that they were Taiwanese but he did not know their names.

No authority

He said the June fire-out of the store was closed when the fire occurred.

"I am determine with finality that the owner of the mall does not have any authority or permit to sell firecrackers there we will file the appropriate charges," Chief Superintendent Bala Pat told the bureau.

The sale, importation and production of firecrackers are supposed to be strictly regulated by the Firearms and Explosives Division (FED) in Camp Crame.

"From what we know, there is no authorized dealer of those particular firecrackers in Ormoc City. The authorized dealer are in Tacloban," Tarla Dan said.

Dela Pat stressed that since early this month, he had ordered his men to conduct operations against the illegal sale of firecrackers.

Fiery day in Cebu

Cebu City also had a "fiery" Christmas Day.

A fire gutted several buildings within the capital before dawn yesterday destroying at least P5 million worth of property.

The Cebu fire latently razed two buildings when fire marshal Ismael Codilla declared it under control.

But the fire continued to spread burning down three more buildings.

Sept. Anderson Cosme, Bureau of Fire Protection regional deputy director for operations, said Codilla would have to explain why he prematurely declared the fire under control. With reports from Alvarez Pagan in Bacolod, and Jhunnex Napallacan, Inquirer Visayas, Inquirer Researched AP

Up to 500 burned alive in Nigeria fuel blast

LAGOS—UP TO 500 PEOPLE were burned alive on Tuesday when fuel from a vandalized pipeline exploded in Nigeria's largest city Lagos, emergency workers said.

Hundreds of residents of the Ilasle Eghe district came to scoop fuel using plastic containers after thieves punctured the pipeline overnight.

"We are talking hundreds (dead). We are yet to confirm the death toll as we don't have it in a 100, 400 or 500," Red Cross secretary general Abdulmoo Oseboy said, adding that 66 people had been evacuated to hospital with serious burns.

A Reuters witness saw hundreds of bodies, most burned beyond recognition, lying at the scene of the explosion as emergency workers went to put out the fire.

A Red Cross volunteers at the scene said: "A lot of people have been roasted. They are literally on the ground." A similar explosion in another part of Lagos in 1984 killed about 200 people.

Pipeline vandalisms and fuel theft are commonly in Nigeria, the world's eighth largest oil exporter where most people live in poverty. Reuters

ORMOC CITY FIRE

24 people were killed on Monday when firecrackers started a fire in a departmental store, police said

- The fire started late on Christmas Day and lasted nearly three hours
- Rescuers recovered 23 charred bodies inside and at the door of the toilet; police are unsure how many people are still missing

Lack of 'safety and survival' culture lamented

By TJ Burgonio

"IT'S A TRAGEDY THAT could have been avoided."

That was how Sen. Richard Gordon, who head of the Philippine National Red Cross, described the department store fire that killed 24 people in Ormoc City on Christmas Day.

He said the high death toll showed the lack of a "culture of safety and survival" among the people and officials in the country.

Basic safety measures should be taught in schools, and those should be complemented by the mass implementation of local ordinances prescribing safety standards in public and private buildings in any town or city, Gordon said.

He proposed the creation of a national safety inspection body that would monitor the implementation of safety standards in any locality.

PHRC has dispatched a team to Ormoc to conduct psychological stress debriefing for the survivors and help ease the relatives of the dead and the injured, Gordon said.

"There could be some men missing who are still unidentified," he said.

Murdered Abra lawmaker buried today

Front page A1

the P5 million assassination project. Dagoc said the three others are at large.

Salazar has denied the charge. The governor also said he was on the side of Chavez by threatening a member of the latter's party Kampi, or not he gave me in the next May elections, possibly against Valera's wife, who is the incumbent Bangued mayor.

Although there is still was no solid evidence against Salazar, Gen. Lomibao said he was issuing the hold order to prevent Salazar from fleeing the country.

"We have the power to issue the HDO even without a formal complaint. We do not want to mess up the investigation by the disappearance of the suspect," Gonzales said.

Immigration regulations chief Edgardo Mendoza said the hold order had been dispatched to all ports in the country's airports and seaports.

Valera wants to see President

Also in Manila, Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor said yesterday that Valera had requested him duties in such an audience with President Macapagal-Arroyo to request her that he be given a "fair investigation."

Valera has expressed concern to the police investigation and that he felt he was being persecuted politically and Defensor who told Valera there was no need for him to see Ms Arroyo.

Defensor said he did not inform Ms Arroyo that Valera had asked but rather informed with Executive Secretary Ronaldo Puno.

Asked whether Valera sought Palace intervention in the investigation, Defensor said "he didn't ask for anything and I don't think (he) will compromise anything."

"The President's message is very clear and that was for authorities to get to the bottom of the killing and to conduct a," Defensor said.

Firearms ban in Abra

Calderon announced that the election firearms ban, due to begin in mid-January, was now in effect in Abra. He also said bodyguards of the Benesanto family participating in the funeral would be asked not to carry firearms.

He said Task Force Abra and Task Force Benesanto would continue until the murder had been solved and police returned to the province.

Task Force Benesanto, headed by Director Arma Sinsuat, chief of the PNP Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG), was formed to solve the killings.

Task Force Abra is headed by Senior Supt. Eugene Martin, for Abra police chief, and was created to ensure peace and order in the province.

Valera house raid

"I met with the municipal police chiefs here and told them to close their areas of private army groups, criminal gangs and the Sara Philippines," Calderon said.

Calderon said he would also meet with members of the CIDG team that raided Valera's house in Bangued on Friday. The CIDG team found an unlicensed rifle and several toy guns from the governor's house.

"Any messages circulating in Abra said the arms in Valera's house as well as the houses of his allies were nothing but "a movement" (frame)) considering the huge amount of weapons the government supposedly seized.

Chavez in Benesanto said her relatives were mourning the family's decision that her father's remains would not stop by the provincial capital during the funeral procession.

Duarte said the body would be taken to the Abra National High School for the eulogies. Benesanto will be buried at the family mausoleum at the Abra Catholic Cemetery.

Tension in Bangued

She said the families of the rebels or slain politicians in Abra would join the funeral procession.

The atmosphere in Bangued, at least in the central business district, remained tense yesterday

POLICE Supt. Franklin Mabanag points to media Tuesday the latest artist's sketch of one of the suspects in Congressman Benesanto's killing. (INQUIRER)

as in the plaza, there were more police officers than pedestrians. A steady stream of people attended the wake at Benesanto's house behind the provincial capitol but the mood was somber. Only a few of the Filipino soldiers was absent.

"People here are silent but I assure you they are behind Benesanto. They are just afraid," said Bangued resident Ingrace Ebuena.

In Manila, Sen. Pia Cayetano said the child police chief in Abra killed this year. Last month, Board Member James Benesanto, a distant relative of the lawmaker, was gunned down while jogging around the Bangued plaza.

In Sagada, La Pat Mayor Hon. Yavael Benesa was shot dead in his hometown during their town fiesta. Before he was murdered, Benesa, 31, was being groomed to run against Valera in next year's election.

His sister mayor, Freddie Dapo, disappointed after the murder and it is now one of the suspects in the killing of Benesanto. With reports from Christine O. Avendaño, Armand N. Nocum, Alvalo Pagan and Leila B. Salaverria

Ban on labor development to Lebanon stays –DFA

JOBSEEKERS HOPING TO FIND NEW or return to old jobs in Lebanon may still have to wait because of political tensions in that country.

A foreign service official yesterday said previously announced recommendations to lift the ban on new Filipino workers in that country have remained inacted upon due to a pending assessment of the security situation there.

Foreign Undersecretary Zenaida Ceniza said Special Envoy to the Middle East Roy Cimatu is set to go to Lebanon in the first week of January to conduct such observations.

Earlier this month, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration said proposals to lift the 7-month-old ban were now in review, and might coincide with the government's implementation of new hiring rules for domestic helpers bound for abroad.

But Ceniza cited "ongoing dissension" in Lebanon as among the reasons why the situation there was still being "carefully watched."

He was apparently referring to the massive street protests in downtown Beirut led by the militant Hezbollah demanding the resignation of US-backed Prime Minister Fouad Saniora, after the latter rejected calls by Hezbollah for a new national unity government.

In related reports, at least 28 people have died in clashes South and East of the country with Hezbollah guerrillas ended in a UN-brokered cease-fire on Aug. 14.

Around 21,000 Filipinos, mostly female domestic helpers, fled the fighting. Of these, around 6,000 were airlifted on chartered flights by the government and the International Organization for Migration while the others left the country with their employers, Ceniza recalled.

Selling kidneys illegal, DOH tells donors

By Christian V. Esguerra

THIS IS A SEASON OF GIVING but there is no place for Filipinos selling their kidneys, according to the Department of Health.

In a statement, the DOH stressed it was "illegal and unethical" to sell one's kidneys even as it admitted that yearly kidney transplantations are commercially carried out in pursuit of patients suffering from end-stage renal disease (ESRD).

"The small percentage of ESRD patients undergoing transplant operations is unremotely attributed to the dearth of kidney donors which the DOH mandates should come primarily from either a relative or a living, related donor," it said.

The number of transplants remained nearly unchanged though organ transplants performed in the country have increased over the last decade, according to figures cited by the DOH. The highest rate of 46 persons was registered in 2000, 020 compared to only 470 in 2004.

Despite the glaring discrepancies between supply and demand in kidney transplantation, the DOH insisted the public not to sell their kidneys.

The DOH noted that "abuse and exploitation" of both patient and donor often happens when illegal transactions are arranged by middlemen.

Under the kidney donation guidelines, a donor can't just walk in a hospital and offer his kidney.

A donor is required to go through a battery of tests, including psychiatric evaluation, to determine his or her fitness as well as counter for donating an organ or is manipulated.

In a previous interview, Dr. Enrique Ona, dean of the government's National Transplant Advisory Board, told the Inquirer that the program does not allow a recipient to pay a donor. This would be tantamount to a sale.

But since patients and always be discouraged from expressing their gratitude, a "gift" (of cash) is inevitable, according to Ona, who is also director of the National Kidney and Transplant Institute.

"The donor is entitled to what we call a gift of society," he said.

3 fishermen rescued after 10 days adrift

By Lolit B. Salaverria

FOR THREE FISHERMEN, salvation came on Christmas Day.

It came in the form of a ship that plucked them from their half-submerged boat in thick industrial waters near Labuag Island, Mindoro, after 10 days adrift.

The three, weak and near death, were among some 200 fishermen from Pangasinan and Zambales who were reported lost in strong winds and waves brought on by the northeasterly Amihan winds on Dec. 15, according to the Philippine Coast Guard.

The rescue of Ireneo Gonzales, 33, Gilbert Oporado, 45, and Gaston Pobre, 47, all from Iba, Zambales, brought to 156 the number of fishermen recovered in confrontations coastal waters. Forty-five more fishermen are still missing, many of them from the village of Lucap, Bolinao, Pangasinan, where a team of rescuers has been dispatched.

In a report, the PCG said the Panamanian-registered MV Ephesus, rescued the three fishermen at 10 a.m. on Dec. 25. The vessel, skippered by Capt. Fidelo Tess, had come from Singapore and was en route to the port of Ningbo, China.

"It is believed that the three Filipino fishermen drifted at sea for 10 days without food and water," the PCG said.

When alerted about the rescue, the PCG dispatched a search and rescue team to Mariveles, Bataan, to track the fishermen. They were brought to the nearest hospital in Limay, Bataan.

HAVING INSURANCE THESE DAYS REALLY PAYS. LITERALLY.

The INSULAR LIFE

Powerful Taiwan quake stirs tsunami alert in RP

From page A1

...nniversary of the waves that killed more than 200,000 in southern Asia. (Related story on Page A1.)

Regina Honesto-Ani Bautista of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said the earthquake did not generate any tsunami, based on information from the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Hawaii.

"The bulletin issued by the Pacific tsunami warning center in Hawaii showed that there was no tsunami generated," Bautista told the Inquirer last night.

Precaution

"The precautions we are taking [of alerting concerned agencies] is based on historical data that small waves might affect small islands in the area, including Davao," he said.

But of the precaution was to advise residents in coastal areas in Southern Luzon to move to higher ground or further away from the coasts, he said.

The danger of a destructive tsunami cannot be a powerful earthquake off Taiwan has passed, Japan's Meteorological Agency said hour Tuesday.

"Our expected waves did not materialize," Hiroaki Kodo of the agency said.

Phivolcs Director Renato Solidum said his agency had alerted the Office of Civil Defense about a tsunami but only as a precaution.

"The earthquake was felt at Intensity 5 in Batan," Solidum said on radio dzBB.

"We have already advised the Office of Civil Defense ... but that is only as a precautionary measure," Solidum added.

"We don't expect a destructive tsunami in the Philippines," OCD chief Glen Rabonza said.

"If the earthquake occurred two hours ago, the tsunami should have hit by now," he told the Inquirer more than two hours after the earthquake occurred. "We are monitoring the situation ... The [tsunami alert] might just be precaution."

Rep. Benedicto Abad of Batanes said the provincial chapter of the Northern Disaster Coordinating Council had been "elevated" to ensure the safety of residents.

Magnitude 7.1

The US Geological Survey said the quake registered magnitude 7.2, while Taiwan's Central Weather Bureau measured it at 6.7.

Two homes in Taiwan's southern city of Fengping collapsed, trapping six people, ETTV cable news reported. The quake also triggered fires and gas leaks, the station said.

No deaths were immediately reported.

Japan's Meteorological Bureau earlier said the quake triggered a one-meter-high tsunami that it said was headed toward the Philippines.

"There is a possibility of a destructive local tsunami," the Japanese bureau said, saying waves were expected to hit Itbayat in the Philippines.

"However, in some coasts, particularly those near the epicenter, higher tsunami may arrive," it said. "Authorities should be aware of this possibility."

No threat

The Hawaii-based Pacific warning center said there was no threat of a destructive Pacific-wide tsunami, based on historical earthquake and tsunami data, but that it would not know for about an hour what the threat might be to Taiwan or the Philippines.

The quake hit on the second anniversary of a massive earthquake off Indonesia that triggered a powerful tsunami in the Indian Ocean which killed 220,000 people in a dozen countries.

Tuesday's quake was felt throughout Taiwan. It swayed buildings and knocked objects off the shelves in the capital, Taipei, in the northern part of the island.

Power from users was cut in the southern cities of Kaohsiung and Pingtung, possibly hindering reports of damage by residents, the CTI Cable News reported. Several high-rise hotels swayed violently in Kaohsiung, it said.

Power from users was restored in one about 22 km southwest of Hengchun on the southern tip of Taiwan. Hengchun is about 430 kilometers of Taipei. With reports from Norman Bordadora, Charlie Lunchbox Mendiola, Michael Lim Ubac, Akiko Fuyo, Inquirer Northern Luzon, and AP

THE COMMERCIAL DISTRICT of Banda Aceh, capital of Aceh province in Indonesia, is reduced to rubble by the tsunami of Dec. 11, 2004. AP

Survivors remember killer tsunami

KISS YOUR BAD BREATH GOODBYE

From page A1

A dozen Islamists wanted guilty circle overhead in one hand. An Italian tourist yesterday, starting at the sun and selling stories about villagers who died. Hundreds more gathered at the day went on, some throwing flowers into the water in others in tangled sticks.

"I cannot forget the victims of two years ago, it feels like they happened just yesterday," said Dahli Sarjawan in the worst-hit region of Aceh on Indonesia's tsunami island.

Like scores of other Acehnese, he prayed Tuesday at mass graves where tens of thousands of people were buried in the days after the disaster, remembering his two children that were injured it can his family by the waves.

"I can still imagine their faces," he said.

Rail drill

The drill on Indonesia's resort island of Bali...which involved real-time warnings sent from the capital to radios along the beach...was as much about raising awareness as testing technology deployed in the country hardest hit two years ago.

Nearly 167,000 of those killed were from Aceh province...hundreds of kilometers west of Bali—where tens of thousands of people still live in temporary homes.

Many walked in crowds, some of them schoolchildren, briskly walked inland from the shore, accompanied by Indonesia's ministers of research and technology and a handful of foreign visitors.

"The biggest challenge is warning with the people to make them aware," said German geologist Harald Spahn, who is helping Indonesia set up its alert network. "It is a really complex job that many people underestimate."

Along Andaman coast

In Thailand, ceremonies were being held along the Andaman coast with Buddhist prayers to remember more than 8,200 killed, many of them foreign holiday makers. Sirens will be launched and candles lit along beaches once again filled with sun-seeking foreign tourists.

Dorothy Wilkinson, a 58-year-old from Surrey, England, still has a hard time going near the water and cries when talking about her fiance, who was killed in the tsunami along with his parents.

But like scores of other survivors, she felt it was important to return for the anniversary.

"This is a time to remember those people who were lost," she said, adding: "I don't want to spend Christmas at home. It is too lonely."

SCHOOL CHILDREN run for safety during a tsunami drill at Sanur beach in Denpasar, Bali Island on Tuesday. AP

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IN THE KNOW

SOME KEY MUTILATIONS THE Dec. 26, 2004 tsunami:

- Toll of dead and missing: 231,065, according to estimate figures from government sources.
- Number of dead and missing in Indonesia: 168,000
- Number of displaced, affected or unaccounted for: 7,817
- Number of countries affected: 13 (Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Bangladesh)
- Number of people displaced: 2,000,000
- Number of people who lost their livelihoods: 1.1 million
- Value of houses and infrastructure destroyed in euros: $1.1
- Duration of earthquake that triggered the 2004 Aceh tsunami: eight minutes
- Total aid pledges, including official aid and private donations: at least $13.9 billion, more than enough to rebuild.
- Private donations alone: $6.7 billion
- Total damages: $10.9 billion, rebuilding costs: $18.3 billion

SOURCE: ICRC, office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, Asian International Studies Journal, government data

Health Advisory
National Center for Health Promotion & National Center for Disease Prevention and Control

HEALTH TIPS FOR A SAFE NEW YEAR

Some health tips for a safe New Year

1. Do not use firecrackers during the holidays. Make some noise using alternative noise-makers such as drums, trumpets, " torotot", tambourines, metal pots or pans, etc.
2. Do not pick up or relight fireworks that failed to ignite.
3. Do not allow children to play with "Watusi". It is poisonous and can kill.
4. Do not use PVC toy guns and cannons. It is harmful to man and the environment.
5. Do not fire your gun.

Why we should avoid using firecrackers?

1. Lighting firecrackers can cause serious if not fatal injuries.
2. Firecrackers can lead to loss of limbs, lives and properties.
3. Exploding firecrackers emit smoke and dust full of harmful chemicals that worsen the pollution in the air and can cause throat and chest congestion and asthma attacks.
4. Setting off firecrackers and other polluting noisemakers like PVC toy guns and cannons leaves behind residual waste such as paper scraps, cellophane, plastic wrappers and PVC pipes which add up to the piles of holiday trash.
5. Firecrackers produce excessive noise, which can lead to anxiety, stress, sleep disorders and hearing disabilities and may trigger high blood pressure and heart attack.

In Sri Lanka, the resurgence of a civil war has added to the misery of survivors and slowed efforts to rebuild—sparking criticism from outgoing UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who urged Tamil Tiger rebels and the military to lay down their arms.

"No one could have prevented the tsunami's wave of destruction," he wrote in a statement. "But together, we can stem the tide of conflict, which threatens once again to engulf the people of Sri Lanka."

Despite hellish scenes that made the waves time the first wave crashed ashore, and all cars and trucks came to a standstill for two minutes. Looking to the future, the first of 100 warning towers was erected on a beach.

In India, where another 16,000 are believed to have died, investors constructor were being held and in Malaysia, where 69 people were killed, volunteers were exploring state graves.

Unprecedented aid

The 2004 tsunami generated an unprecedented, outpouring of generosity with donor pledges reaching some $13.6 billion, but many of those homeless complain they are stuck with poorly built structures that leak, are terrain inherent or located in flood zones.

Corruption has also marred the process, with several nongovernmental organizations forced to delay projects or rebuild homes after contractors and suppliers ran off with the funds.

Thailand faced fresh questions about possible graft yesterday.

Seven Western tourists were a factor to Thai police saying up to 40 percent of the $1.6 million set aside to help identify the dead in that survivor-appeal may have been misused.

The money may have gone toward travel and other miscellaneous costs, an unnamed US diplomat was quoted as saying in the English-language daily The Nation, calling for an investigation. AP

UN okays RP proposal vs global poverty–JDV

DE VENECIA

$2.3 trillion in foreign debt of the Philippines and 101 other heavily indebted countries into equity in mass housing, food production, infrastructure, irrigation, education, clean water, anti-AIDS and health care, and other projects.

Philippine Ambassador to the United Nations Lauro Baja described the proposal, which was conceived by De Venecia two years ago, as the "year-end 1+1 sample for the Speaker and AP presidencies."

Baja said the new campaign would be a concerted effort to get the rest of the Paris Club and the G-8 countries—United States, Great Britain, Russia, Germany, Canada, Italy, France and Japan.

In a phone interview, De Venecia said the plan "does not call for debt forgiveness nor moratorium nor debt cancellation nor debt discount," or even new money from US, European and Japan governments.

"We proposed only that the rich countries, multilateral institutions and large commercial banks plow back into the economies of debtors countries 50 percent of the debt-service payments due them," he said.

Millennium push

This conversion, he said, would fund the UN Millennium Development Goals, which include halving global poverty.

Under the De Venecia scheme, 50 percent of the Philippine debt-service payments of $1.3 billion a year should not be remitted to creditor countries but instead be converted as their "equity investment" in the country.

Mechanics of the conversion scheme such as the earnings of the equity investments will be drawn up by the Paris Club, said De Venecia.

"The argument for debt conversion is that the poor countries don't have the adequate resources to finance the antipoverty programs under the UN Millennium Development Goals," he said.

Philippine debt stands at P3 trillion, five times bigger than the annual national budget.

Late last year, the General Assembly unveiled "task force" of the proposal, which was organized by President Horst Kohler and Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo.

The task force after Mr Annan and De Venecia formally presented the debt-conversion strategy at the United Nations in September 2005.

De Venecia also presented the debt-conversion strategy in speeches to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank at the time.

The Speaker arrived in New York City on Dec. 22 to survive the news as the United Nations following earlier endorsement of his plan by outgoing UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, Indonesian President Yudhoyono, Pakistani Premier El Aziz and Costa Rican Premier Oscar Iras.

Birthday gift

De Venecia, who celebrated his birthday yesterday by attending Mass in St. Patrick's Cathedral in Manhattan, said the UN approval was a "birthday gift to him and the Filipino nation."

In return, he said his staff distributed lunch boxes to 3,000 urban poor families in three districts and Pangasinan during his birthday.

The Spanish government adopted the De Venecia proposal into law a few weeks ago, following endorsements by Romanian and Bulgarian governments and by leaders of the G-77 countries, which now number 132 of the 192 members of the UN.

De Venecia said the Christian Democrats representing 130 political parties in Europe, Latin America and Africa met last month at the Canary Islands and supported his proposal.

Much earlier, 69 Asian political parties meeting in Seoul for the International Conference of Asian Political Parties and representatives of 33 Asian parliaments at the Asian Parliamentary Assembly meeting in Iran endorsed the debt-for-equity plan.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) issued the Bohol Declaration in Cebu early this month also adopted the proposal.

De Venecia reported to Mr Annan by phone before Christmas and asked the President, Russia and UN representative to the Philippines Elena Nabbi to include the proposal in the Asean and East Asian Summit in Cebu next month.

De Venecia, who is in bed by the doctor's command to address the meeting of press-

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Penthouse
Duplex
Studio
1 Bedroom
2 Bedroom
3 Bedroom
Loft
Townhouse
Single Detached
Semi-Detached
Row House
Corner Unit
Interior Unit
Ground Floor
Second Floor
Third Floor
Fourth Floor
Fifth Floor
Sixth Floor
Seventh Floor
Eighth Floor
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Thirty-Seventh Floor
Thirty-Eighth Floor
Thirty-Ninth Floor
Fortieth Floor
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Electricity
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Maintenance Area
Storage Area
Trash Area
Recycling Area
Green Area
Open Space
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Sino poachers caught with endangered fish in Tubbataha

ENDANGERED species like this beautiful Napoleon wrasse were found in the Chinese fishing boat in Tubbataha.

By Marlon Ramos
Inquirer Southern Luzon

CALAMBA CITY— THIRTY CHINESE fishermen were caught in possession of endangered fish species when their vessel was inspected while passing inside the protected Tubbataha National Marine Park.

Angelique Songco, Tubbataha Management Office (TMO) manager, said Tuesday that 200 pieces of live Napoleon wrasse fish, locally known as Mameng, 500 Lapu-lapu and 500 culi snappers were found inside the vessel when park guards inspected it last Dec. 21.

Aside from violating the provincial ordinance banning the entry of commercial fishing vessels within the Tubbataha Reefs, the Chinese fishermen also violated the National Integrated Protected Areas System Act.

They also face charges for violation of the Fisheries Code and Wildlife Act of the Philippines after park guards recovered 300 live Mameng from their boat.

Songco said aside from her office, BMA and the provincial government of Palawan, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources will also file similar charges.

Charges galore

If found guilty, the Chinese nationals could be jailed from 12-20 years and pay a fine of P120,000 each.

Songco said the Chinese nationals had passports and temporary visit permits.

According to papers presented by the owners, the vessel came from Hongqiao, Tawi-Tawi and was caught by the marine park staff on Dec. 21.

She said that while the suspects were not caught fishing inside Tubbataha, "the mere entry inside the park is unlawful."

The Chinese fishermen had claimed that they bought the fishes from local fishermen.

But the possession and trade of Mameng is prohibited under the Convention for the International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES), she said.

Songco said the Philippines is one of the signatories of CITES.

She said the owner likewise claimed that the crew unknowingly entered the national marine park.

"That's impossible. They know (from their charts) that the park is located within (how many) nautical miles from the reefs," she said.

Songco said she also doubted the claims of the crew that they were not fishing after 53 (aluyong tatsuli boats) and several air compressors were found aboard the boat.

She said it was possible that the Chinese nationals used the vessels in their illegal fishing activities.

Illegal fishing gear

A boat from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) is set to arrive to escort the 253-ton fishing vessel of the arrested Chinese from one of the islands within the Tubbataha Reefs where it is currently held by park guards.

"We expect the boat of the BFAR to arrive here (at our office in Puerto Princesa City) on Wednesday noon. It will immediately depart for Tubbataha so we can present the Chinese poachers before the prosecutor's office in Puerto Princesa on Thursday," she said in a mobile phone interview.

Songco said aside from the crew members of the vessel, they will also file charges against its supposed owner, who identified himself as Peng Yuan Kong.

Songco, she said, had repeatedly threatened to sue her for holding the Chinese nationals and their boat.

"The owner alleged that they have proper documents to prove that their operation was legal. He actually threatened me, saying I have no right to hold his crew. But I am not afraid because they really violated the laws," she said.

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The Daily Gospel

Wednesday, December 27, 2006
St. John, Apostle & Evangelist

1st Reading: 1 Jn 1:1-4
Gospel: John 20:1..2-8

On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala ran to Peter and the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and she said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we don't know where they have laid him."

Peter then and his companion disciple to go to the tomb. They ran together but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down and saw the linen cloths lying flat, but he did not enter.

Then Simon Peter came following him and entered the tomb; he, too, saw the linen cloths lying flat. The napkin, which had been around his head was not lying flat like the other linen cloths but was rolled up in its place. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and believed.

Commentary

John proclaims in his letter what he has seen and known himself intimately and manifest that the "Word became visible among us. He seeks to share this life we freely given with his children of faith, so that joy may abound. John writes from long habit, in parallelism, for speaking the Word of truth. John is the first of the beloved disciples, who saw and believed and found meaning in the loss of God given to us in Jesus. God's Word of unbounded love to all the earth.

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Slain innocents

EDITORIAL

AS TOLD IN MATTHEW'S GOSPEL, AFTER THE wise men visited the infant Jesus, King Herod heard of the visit and was filled with jealousy and rage. He ordered the killing of all male infants in Bethlehem and the surrounding countryside so as to liquidate the threat.

Christian tradition honors the massacred children, calling them Holy Innocents, and claiming them as martyrs who are commemorated in the West on Dec. 28 and in the East on the 29th.

Our own holiday season was grimly interspersed by the assassination of an Ateneo congressman. Overlooked was a poor 13-year-old boy who became an innocent casualty of that political crime. The boy was hit by a stray bullet and taken to a hospital, the latest in a long and generally anonymous catalogue of women and children whose only crime has been to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, at the ruthless craziest moment.

The past year has been a grim one, in terms of activists and journalists being caught in the crossfires of assassins or being the target of grenade attacks. On the whole, these killings have gone unpunished.

But these haven't been the only crimes of political expropriation. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines has pointed out that the dismal human rights record of the military and police, including provincial militias, must be joined to the reprehensible acts of rebels who have engaged in their share of political murder and intimidation.

The collapse of the peace process, particularly in the case of the communist insurgency, has returned large swathes of the country to a virtual no-man's land, where rebels and government forces both engage in human rights violations, with neither side interested in anything more than claiming the atrocities are the responsibility of the other side.

Add to this the killings undertaken for political or ideological vendetta, by warlord armies that have moved in after military mopping-up operations, to further intimidation labor and peasant organizations; as the bodyguards or paid agents of politicians who, unsure if elections are going to push through, are now doing their butchery double-time to prove the way for the election; and finally, add to this the killings due to theft and hold-ups that have gone wrong—and we have a nation teetering on the edge of anarchy and lawlessness in too many places, while too few places can be said to be under the authentic rule of law.

It is the absence of the law and the failure of our legal system to uphold peace and order that runs the narrative of our society into life-long venues. For while in these are many children who die in the crossfire, there are many more who find their lives permanently scarred by fear and loss. The child who witnesses a political murder, or who is tutored into a refugee by military and rebel activities, or who loses a parent or sibling to terrorism or other kinds of aggression, is a child more likely than not to become an adult inclined to the consequences of killings. Where there is rebellion and counter-insurgency there you see child-soldiers being recruited.

The transformation of children into combatants for one side or another, when both sides should be doing more to keep them out of harm's way, is the manufactured-ignorant root of the culture of impunity. If all sides view human rights abuses, including political killings, as something only the other side commits, and therefore for which each side believes it is never answerable, they will not stop. And we will only have more slain innocents.

In this season, then, of the Prince of Peace, as the country marks a brief cessation of hostilities, all sides need to reflect on the price of the struggle that will resume with the New Year. Rebels and soldiers will resume their operations, and to the mayhem and confusion their operations create will be added the shadowy activities of scenarios hatched by the countless political factions which don't trust the ballot but only have faith in the bullet.

And yet the solution is there, for those who would see it: to declare local communities zones of peace, where innocents can remain innocent and uncontaminated by conflict. But it requires resolve and an unyielding refusal to compromise with any and all sides that insist that the solution to a problem is the gun.

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Of congressmen and squatters

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

YOU MAY PROBABLY ALREADY HEAD THE letter of Alfrey Ruiz, Ethel Lupisan in the Letters section of the Inquirer's Christmas issue. In the letter, Lupisan defends himself from the allegations of Ruiz's Concerned Artists in the column of Dec. 11 and in another letter-to-the-congressman, Luis Villafuerte, over in the Bataan railroading the hotel Oas-Asia expansion while they were still reeling from the impact of the supreme pronouncement that ordered the eagle-line regime Lupisan claims he was in Albay helping his constituents relate of the mass fatal building the Oas-Asia change in the Hotel. Pang Ba-vasco Manila and other all that time.

His counsel request Lupisan to submit such a supervised act. But we can understand that he may up unable to defend himself. Let us give him the satisfaction of thinking that he has convinced the public with the alibi that he did his duty to his constituents as well as his duty to his family and mentors in the House and Malacañang.

But what about the exposé, also from Albay, that during the relief work goods supplied by the Department of Social Welfare and Development and intended for the typhoon victims were unlawfully for distribution by workers of Lupisan until they could stamp the name of his wife, who is running for mayor, on the packages? The people were starving and cold and restless, and the food and supplies were there but were withheld because of politics, despite the pleas of the bishop to distribute them. The people were made to suffer and rest while Lupisan's workers put the name of his wife on the packages, which were provided by the DSWD and not by Lupisan and his son. The bishop was reported to be so angry that when the supplies were finally released, he refused to accept them.

And what about this incident, broadcast **on television and witnessed by hundreds of thousands of viewers, where Quezon City Rep. Jesse Ruiz Jimenez berated on the floor of the House during the debates on** Oas-Asia that the Catholic Church told not

protest against Charter change because the bill just "deserved Pit in Hause brother Church." The records of the House should contain this quote from Jimmy: "Hindi nalalabanan ang kinahuhuhuan kasi hinigaan ko 'yon ng apat na milyon."

Jimmy's words from real estate is big today in Novaliches which the representative, but how they should have "donation" to make the Church billion but wishes makes it sound like a bribe. I am surprised that Jesse was not even a whimper from the Churches to protest this tweet, although the prayer rally at the Luneta sponsored by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines is proof that the Church cannot be bribed.

If Jimmy is so rich that the real estate millions in the Church just like that, why doesn't he provide funds to flush Congressional assistant which is now clerical? The clerical aides should help managers Commonwealth estate, but have left unfinished for decades. Jimmy hails Kha, opposite Roosevelt Avenue to Luzon Avenue and parallel to Commonwealth and Quirino Avenues, such to Congressional has gone to fast and more and more years. Only a little more than one kilometer remains to be finished. Why is it taking such a long time? Red tape, neglect and, according to the Department of Public Works and Highways, lack of funds.

Now Jimmy and the rest of his time aren't even paved partly with the pork barrel of former Rep. Chuck Hinlay. But now that Jimmy has replaced Hinlay with his dropped again.

I saw signs on Commonwealth that Jimmy funded, from her own pork barrel, the widening of that avenue. But why is the not doing the same by Congressional whether it has dollars? It is because Congressional was funded by her and Hinlay? But if she is who would be benefited most? In Batasan but her constituents living in subdivisions lining Congressional, who now have to pass through other subdivisions and pay numerous tricycle fare in order to get to their homes. When Congressional is finally finished, it will provide motorists in those subdivisions and end the wrangling and court cases over dividend by homeowners' associations.

If Jimmy, who goes to Congress to all-white bulls from and dad in an all-white suit, is so rich, why doesn't she use some of her pork barrel loan even her personal wealth) to finish Congressional? And if she is really the real estate magnate that they say she is, why doesn't she build modern-day housing for the squatters who would be displaced by the project?

Enough of the bad news. It's still the Christmas season after all. Here's some good news: Congressional Avenue will finally be extended to its other end, across Tandang Sora, but not the other end to Luzon Avenue. There are now funds for the right-of-way across Tandang Sora, but it is not provided, not by Jimmy or the DPWH, but by Mayor Feliciano Belmonte, Quezon City is now the richest city in the country thanks to Belmonte, which is why it can afford to fund projects that are the responsibility of the national government, such as Congressional Avenue.

And I had to observe why Quezon City residents are wondering why Belmonte is not using some of that money to erase the image of his city as the "squalor capital of the Philippines." Why doesn't he build more modern-day housing for squatters to get out of his blighted city and away from the eyesore of the government to prevent the entry of more squatters? I am sure the city will earn even more from taxes if all those land occupied by squatters are developed and put to better use.

Good God

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

LAST FRIDAY, THE KAMPANYANG PARTY CAME, and with a full page ad in the Business. The ad invited people to join it and run under its banner in the May elections. The banner-bild of Ombudsman Security appointed Manly Pichon, Repatriate pitches itself as the antithesis of basic politics.

Its agenda is one any God-fearing, civic minded, or just plain decent person can subscribe to. It wants to clean up the Philippines. It wants to battle to push from ridding corrupt politics to ending "sports where entails purported to inflict physical harm or violence on the opponent." I quote the Manny Pacquiao's bigone of him in this country but hope to live in it.

I asked Pichon how many candidates Kapatiran would be fielding this May and what positions they would be seeking. He answered with his usual focus that he doesn't know that yet, and that is precisely the reason they are inviting potential candidates to the party. Their candidates a mystery. The party method is to start with individuals or personalities and build platforms from there. In Kapatiran, they start with the platform and draw believers to the fold.

The major system is for individuals or parties to run on their own three party parties. The politicians who join those parties do not do so because they believe in what the parties stand for, they do so because they believe in what their standard-bearers can do for their careers. That is why they flock and dump from party to party. That might as much explain the confusion and chaos in the party. Their candidates are strangers. In Kapatiran's case, the people who will join it have only their conviction to serve as their decision. Kapatiran does not offer much by way of resources, but it offers a party by way of principles.

Their candidates will not spend a fortune to run for public office. They are banking on the voters, with the help of the Church and other institutions that champion morality, to see their candidates who spend a fortune to win office will subject to serious legal battles from them after they do. The Kapatiran candidates will merely offer honesty and good government, with their own reputations or life's work to recommend their cause.

Dadurahan quote? Baby ini-shoot?

Maybe. But before we dismiss it as such, let us look a little at ourselves and see if the problem does not lie in us. Indeed, let us look a little at ourselves. How often if this project or experiment is the one that is standing on its head or on its. How often, the idea that parties come first before members is the most commonsensical thing in the world. How often, the notion that a party is the repository of Churchill, only it is that we can have a parliamentary system while having no real parties, or where parties follow the ambitions of individuals and not where individuals subscribe to the beliefs of parties, would be the furthest thing in the world from the opposite to true. How often, we should ask ourselves if we haven't gotten so used to looking at things upside down that we keep thinking upstairs, heart, or place among the things that are really standing right side up.

We keep repeating that we have to do better but to choose between GMA and Noy. That is hasty. This country has never had decisive alternatives. It is not even in question of one, or the ability to discern them. It is merely a question of will, or the willingness to act on them. The one place to see is in the last elections. Why should the country be enslaved only to a choice between GMA and FPJ? There were other candidates, and he were moved over. To this day, I believe Raul Roco would have made a good president. Just because he was a clown does not prevent all too keenly, and notwithstanding that he personally would not have endorsed him as a man of people.

But the self-styled political pundits said the others were not "winnable." Stunningly, curiously that is how is sweeping the world on its head. What makes a candidate "winnable"? Is it that we want to vote for them. What makes candidates unwin that we vote for them. We refuse to name to vote for a pick, he does not become "winnable." We refuse to vote for a pick, he does not win. Other of course there by pulling up facts and supporting the services of Agency. Candidates do not become winnable by an act of God or by something that inheres in their person. They become winnable because of a power we hold in our hands. That is the vote.

Two and it again and again. The only thing we have that matters is power in the vote. Power is not for sale. And the only thing worse than buying the power but not using it.

Are parties like Kapatiran quixotic and fanciful? Or have our past become jaded or blind? If they do, they have a point. Because if we don't even change rather than Charter change, then that is on to a deeper sense than the bishops themselves allow. We do need to acknowledge our own contribution to the mess that is this country. We do need to start doing what might in right-to-right but proper.

The problem about political alternatives is not visible exception. As I keep telling audiences, we all like to damn public officials for having no honest home to their bodies and hospitals. But it applies to others, too, as well. Just count the baptisms or weddings of our children, who do we get in their sponsorships? Do we get the upright public school teacher down the street who can barely make ends meet, or the hotshot executive in the other end of the street whose sole ambition in life seems to be dedicated only to collecting rent from others and vendors? You pick the first and people will laugh at you and call you stupid.

I do know Randy Dedoroy has been called many names. Well, I guess he deserves it. He is a member of the most hated institution in society (sabi: He is guilty of dreams. And, worse, seeming to spread it.

Palestine's necessary civil war

WORLD VIEW

Barry Rubin

RECONCILIATION OF THE LATEST BATTLE MEMORANDUM is not, in the late between nationalist Saudi and Islamist Hamas seems to be gaining intensity. Meantime politics, ideology and history of Palestinian Arab nationalism, the leadership has reached new heights of internal conflict, pulling the population deeper into disorder and pushing them further away from statehood.

The movement's remarkable ability to survive itself is not new. In the late 1960s, the Palestine Liberation Organization, led by Fatah, established its Jordanian base and later expelled it by force. During the 1970s, the PLO survived intensive civil war, wrecking one by unknown forces. The anti-Arafat rebels Israel, Syria and Islamist political leaders agitated in the 1980s was that the PLO should be thrown out of Lebanon. During the 1990s, the PLO leadership opposition to peace the Oslo Israeli and the Oslo Treaty, creating a stable and development, and establishing state and institutions with Israel.

Beginning a deal with Israel in 2000, Saudi-armed homeland violence result that has lasted over since then, destroying the infrastructure built up in the previous decade. Hamas, which in the previous decade, thanks foreign aid was scorn, squandered, or needlessly unnecessary violence.

When Yasser Arafat, the perennial PLO Fatah and Palestinian authority leader, died, Palestinians had a chance to end their disorder, as it was Arafat, Mr. Arafat's replacement, Mahmoud Abbas, was a moderate, and particularly strong figure with second palestinian military base of his own.

During the 1990s, as the challenge from Hamas increasingly threatened, he could not the situation—after all, he was basically on his own—and refused to curb them. He was motivated by refusing to build strong institutions. So next battle died, the next crowd in on Fatah.

Then Arafat's longtime deputy Mahmoud Abbas in the January 2006 parliamentary elections. Fitna, Arafat's legacy left Fatah and the PLO completely unprepared. In deep division means that Fatah candidates split the vote and nominees Hamas invisible.

Second, Saudi terror gave Palestinians any alternative vision. Apart from a few scattered opposition—some by Abbas himself—it moved to expand peace and compromise. In discussions, Saudi area not much different than Hamas, and the two competed to prove who waged terror on Israel and was more militant.

Finally, Saudi did a terrible job in governing. Bringing Palestinians neither material benefits nor a sense. Instead, it brought massive corruption and administrative incompetence, together with heartbreaking arrogance. When Palestinian Finance Minister Salam Fayyad—a former World Bank manager employed "Everyone will vote for Abbas and everything will be all right." But while Abbas remains chief executive, Hamas controls the parliament and the government.

So Saudi is now in deep trouble, as you say. One of Saudi's few remaining assets is that the West, has stifled by Hamas' more open base supporting and extremism, has largely frustrated the new Palestinian regime and cut off aid. With Hamas allied to Iran and Syria, Saudi has received more assistance in geopolitical terms.

On this front, however, there are unfortunate realities that few will admit. Instead, the West continues to believe that there is still a chance of Saudi-Israeli peace, that this problem can be Europe's assumption that Hamas might become more moderate, and that Fatah and Hamas can somehow form a government of national unity.

People of good will who want a non-permanent solution, with Israel and Palestine living peacefully as neighbors, simply don't want to hear the fact that such an end to Saudi is now decades away. Palestinian politics, total misery and Israel's determination is still preferable to an Israeli annexation that this goal is unattainable: terrorism cannot be eliminated, and law and order must be imposed.

But Fatah's division as extensive as Hamas. Anarchy rules, and there is no one with the vision and strength to end it. Dozens of international plans and proposals collapse one after the other. The Israeli "unilateral" with Israel is reduced to the daily series of missiles fired from Gaza, with ceasefires among Palestinians have typically been broken by gunfire and assassination attempts within minutes.

Now Abbas has called for new elections, which Hamas rejects, and it seems unlikely that he has the capacity to impose his will. Many people advocate the simple expedient of "strengthening Abbas" as a moderate, but one cannot strengthen what is not there.

The irony is that real change could come about only from a civil war won by moderates. But the Palestinians are not engaged in a civil war pitting moderates versus extremists. The reciprocal movement between Fatah and Hamas in deadly struggle fueled by greed and patronage. There are limits to how far that struggle will go, but the Palestinians are not going to stop fighting among themselves or against Israel.

This is an unpleasant reality, but recognizing it is crucial to understanding why no political solution works, and why every clever plan to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian or Israel-Palestinian conflict fails.

Professor Rubin is director of the Global Research in International Affairs Center. Israel disciplinary. Rubin's most recent book is "The Truth About Syria."

A litmus test

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

INSTEAD OF PEACE AND GOOD WILL for all humankind, what reigned in the minds and hearts of Muslim Faith imagery, anxiety, and a skeptical of endangered fish have been three year-four days: tension, suspicion and fear of a possible conflict between the Philippines and China.

"A diplomatic standoff looms," writes Jerry Esplanada in the Philippine Star. Perhaps, but more, "What is clearly an environmental crime in the eyes of the media is being emphatically exonerated by a rather presumptuous diplomatic officer, backed up by the entire Filipino nation as a "heritage to be treasured for the Philippines."

The story behind this latest wildlife in the Tubbataha Reefs last Dec. 27 when a container vessel of Marine Park rangers in the Tubbataha Reefs National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site, earlier protected area, as the rangers approached the vessel, it sped off, but after a 30-minute chase, and firing warning shots, the rangers finally caught up with the vessel, which was subsequently escorted to port.

According to an incident report on board the vessel by ship were 34 Chinese from Hong Kong, including one woman, with travel papers for a temporarily dock. Also on board were approximately 600 live sea turtles, 4,000 pieces of Tridacna Squalicus Hunter, known locally as "Giant Clam," a protected species under the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES), also found on the vessel were 11 illegal fishing nets and other equipment.

Tubbataha Park manager Angelique Songco requested that a prosecutor to issue the search warrant to Petrovia. Meanwhile, the Chinese crew insisted that they were just "passing through" the protected area, and that they had no idea that they were in violation of the endangered fish and equipment like compressors and lobsters, set among the list of one which are "an endangered part of "resource passage."

RELATED: The request from Tubbataha manager Songco, that Sulu Sibug Danga of Wescom asked to authorize the deployment of a Navy vessel to escort the Hi Hua to Puerto Princesa, was denied.

THE LATEST word is that the 38% would has banished a probe into this alleged intervention. "The matter is undergoing investigation with the provincial and national committee on illegal recruitment," Director Michael Aguinaldo of the Bureau of Immigration told reporters. "If there is evidence that a foreign military attaché is directly and brazenly interfering in Philippine affairs."

Hmmm, sounds familiar!

Meanwhile, according to a news report, Chinese diplomats have demanded the release of the Hi Hua and its crew. Even the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila has expressed concern about the welfare of the crew. Ranges of the Philippine Navy, spokesman Lt. Col. Ariel Caparas said that China has been requesting for the release of the vessel and its crew. Caparas said that China has been requesting for the release of the vessel and its crew.

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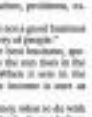
"And yet, the business in doing in philippine is in not good for the local people! I know! Give of investment, they will leave, it is not a good philippine family. Is it wrong? Is very disappointed for the apo is not think about the philippine public life. Fishermen like a hard."

"The person clearly does not understand, or is naïve, or has been misled," Sanjuan says. "He seems to believe that NGOs call the shots, without any legal basis. His love seems to indicate that he believes that business is business, and should be allowed to go on whether there are laws in the country or not. Unfortunately for him, he has been operating illegally for some time in the Philippines, having made significant investments."

He says the issue with a litmus test of our government's ability to defend our sovereignty and territorial integrity, while protecting the environment and endangered species from criminal exploitation.

Words of advice

LOOKING BACK



Jambesh R. Geronimo

WHILE RADIO FEMINISTS CALL FOR A RISE that of beauty over "feminity", I relate, not because of gender, but rather for the fact that none we are almost invisible industry. Fanny is under romantic notion of concept of beauty and small – because the people writing history are mostly men. If women left more historical records and if we had more women historians, then the landscape would truly be different. What would our history have been if Mrs. Cupin Apo, Mrs. Aguinaldo, Mrs. Quezon were writing and delivering instead of keeping home?

In the last century we have seen women take more active roles in history... from Imelda Marcos to Cory Aquino to Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who have all been in the forefront of the political scenarios. We have seen a great deal of change, but the number of history-makers are often our mates.

What would our lives be if our mothers were down when neither they gave their children, or if they never knew what they instilled into our heads as we were growing up?

One of the instructible lines of my mother, as I started like an insatiable glass of vegetables, was, "Ubusin mo iyan, masarap yung nagagawan sa India." It's not that I felt so sympathy for the starving masses in India, but I understood that, "Kulot, dang kakainin ka ni mahabang-ka-ahit"!

It was a sensible and logical retort, but it drew a stop on the face and more emphasis on the plate. My mother considered that restraint simply for reason, so her denying she had no right.

Now that I am a mother to my daughter in a university too, Para Villanueva Baker (2006-1954) and those were compiled by her daughter Maria Kristine Kingbird, former senator and current chief, in a biography published in 1993. The book was for me, the story of women's reference to our day and quite apt after Christmas because she has notable advice on money:

"If you want revenge on your enemy, push him into poverty. You will feel fully vindicated when you see him in the hospital, according to a news report. Dictator diplomat have dedicated to be subject of the life. With what is in store, even if something that the Kenyan meant the venal one of the area. Europe also said that Elaine Ednes, operations manager of South Pacific Inter-marketing Corp., which claims to be managing the Hi Hua, leases the vessel but is not from the USAR, a claim that Sanjuan denies. He said the BFAR has no other representative in Tawi-tawi, where the Hi Hua had come from, and that even if it did, no government agency would issue such a permit other than "manning" to the list of protected species.

* * *

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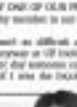
Youthful elderly

WITH THE RECENT RETIREMENT OF ONE OF OUR PRESIDENTS, I have become the oldest faculty member in our sociology department in UP Diliman.

Obviously, what was unusual as difficult as I thought it'd be. No one believes me anymore at UP (nothing the with a lot of boasting, but the other day someone came up to me in a bookstore and asked if I was the Inquirer columnist and after I

PINOY KASI



Michael L. Tan

said yes, he told it was good to see a match between the photograph (look to your right) and the real (before, I smiled over to me, thanked him and told him proudly the photo-

graph was lifted from my UP faculty ID card, which was six or so years younger, maybe even earlier.

And secondly, to share? Maybe, but I'm not quitting all the boasts yet today, some help. Words took my father and mentor. My father lives up to his name, Julio, which means "youthful," looking about the age I am now, with no notion how about me having enough white hair to look like the grandmother she is.

Until now, providing anything has claims to remove or maintain youth—from apps to health foods—gives you better odds at staying young, given all the attention that's being peddled these days. And avoiding worse? That's selfish too: my experience is one of the least attached in the university that the medical profession could teach, much I say what with genius colds! (more than I do, not maybe the advice should be overtaxing others can age you.

* * *

Seriously, staying young isn't as much a function of antioxidants and assistance of stress than morning life head on, armed with advice from those who've successfully made it into their 70s healthy and well-adjusted to life.

December's many reasons are always a good time to meet with them. The other night, I agreed to join my parents at a restaurant where they hosted a dinner for friends from many years. I had not seen many of them in the 1970s.

I had tried to ramrod myself pleading that I was not going, when my parents first asked me to join them, but agreed in the end because all of their friends had, before wife, because "Tatay" and "Nanay," and some of them I had not seen for years. We talked we finally arrived to at the restaurant, I had this vision of the 1970s, and I was not ready for the shock of walking cause, the dinner could have been taking place in 1970. Yet, this was 2006 and no one in the group was below 60.

As I watched my parents and the uncles and aunties interacting, I thought of something my family Catholic cause had told me some years back, drawing from her life in the east. "People don't really change. What you'll see in the years of 'grandness' people become more of what they were in their youth." How true, I thought. Whatever they were years ago—quiet or loquacious, jolly or solemn—they were even more so now.

I elevated with my psychologist friend, Dr. Theresa Bautista, if there were studies about personality and aging and she said yes, certainly. Psychologists say we're born with basic personality traits that are being with us our old age, but they're refined by experience.

"Neuroses" is a cluster of personality traits that have been shaped by society. Take aggression as an example. You see the differences even among infants, but that aggressive little tyke can learn, from parents and teachers, to temper that characteristic, to tap that trait in a positive way. That's the stuff that drives great leaders, for example.

On the other hand, if someone's aggressiveness is not reined in and that person is able to rule into power, we see that non-channeled tendency into aggression. Unfortunately, that arrogance can get that person places, if he's able to subject and use his fellow men to achieve his own ends or the scheme. If the arrogance goes unchallenged or is even praised as a virtue, we eventually see insolence and impunity.

* * *

We reap what we sow. The ones who tame their aggressiveness will age into wonderful grandparents, counselors, colleagues. Those who channel their aggressiveness to the common good will be remembered as great leaders. The ones who cannot will only emerge, and I use, raising my intricacies for productive pursuits. There won't be a lack of opportunities either, as people buy and pull down back to work.

And the "unwanted" cases? Is impossible. If they create the power they have to create, they can also destroy. Here is a history world believing that arrogance is good. But once they lose their power, usually usurped by a new generation of more aggressive colleagues, their social support evaporates overnight. Psychologists also do not mean that benevolence is natural, the absence of aggression. In fact, biologically, the neurological circuits are breaking down as what's once medicine of preeminence be unwanted ones at the helm, and life will now disappear, the most becoming sinister in old age.

* * *

Lots of

Which takes me to the "list of" aspect of aging. We know old age is associated with several decisive breaking down, and we must dismiss missing down, the remembering here.

Yet I can't help thinking that "list of" isn't necessarily a loss. Human lore go of short-term memory that while memory fully addressing years. Advances' parents to keep some of their long-term memory, which can be amazingly vivid, and unyielding.

I love to where the elderly play dead for Filipino, nagbibingo (bingoless), pretending they can't hear because they don't want to hear. Despite claims to hearing loss, it seems impaired by the ability to hear the whispers of the man they're giving your message children were doing, and were saying, to and with whom, and who were away.

The youthful elderly tend to some from environments where they are constantly challenged to be active, physically and mentally. Take the case of Filipino seniors in Singapore, whose native roots are allowed to flourish in a new environment—the former big boss, Lee Kuan Yew—think that unsurpassing Romeos doesn't work as well as a grandparent. If it's in them to be patient and kind, an infant grandchild will bring out these virtues.

The grandchild probably do less on being taught out his advice. But do in terms of that play between the "time of" and the "lists of." Which lacks little people for advice and they give for a minefield, 1 million it's because they are so many opinions they want you to choose from. In contrast, when they just look at you and smile, you know it's their way of saying, "Papasi ito, I'm old now. Don't get me to condone what you want to do. I'm still young yet, what's right and wrong or do what you should be doing, even if it's more difficult."

When you ask someone acutely how they keep young, don't be surprised if they just smile, the silence as golden as more years.

The INQUIRER is a member of the PHILIPPINE PRESS INSTITUTE

If rape happened in the US

LIKED BY THE FINANCIAL TIMES of London that the United States is pressuring the Philippine government to release a recently convicted American rapist into US custody otherwise the US government will withhold its military aid to the Philippines.

As an American, I can say unequivocally that [and the last three—where an incoherent, drugged or drunk, seriously abused young woman was flung in a state of degrading undress on to a street filled with hurtling motor vehicles—accustomed to the United States, the criminals (even if they were a group of foreign soldiers) would all be facing long prison sentences. There would be no spiritual advisers like Fr. Jamet Bunye, no "We Love The Pope!" Initiale fan clubs to defend and, certainly, no overt or covert pressure from any foreign government to "go easy on the lads."

Where on earth can such things happen except, it seems, in the Philippines, where a significant sector of the population still resigns to a self-hating colonial inclination to favor the American over their Filipino.

I wonder how Sgt. Bell if he were directly related to that girl who was raped.

—JONY XAVIER,
jonny_aguilas 1016@yahoo.com

More in favor of Americans than Filipinos

I WOULD LIKE TO COMMENT ON Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez's statements regarding the cancellation of the Visiting Forces Agreement next year. He said that Judge Benjamin Pozon doesn't respect the agreement between the Philippine and US governments.

The Americans [are all of them] involved in this rape case don't even know how to respect Filipinas, as why is our secretary of [in]justice siding with them? He obviously hates Filipinos given his

I wonder how [and if] he were directly related to that girl who was raped.

—JONY XAVIER,
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LETTERS

A lady acts like one

AH EDUAL, THAT WAS A GREAT editorial in the Inquirer's Dec. 7 issue.

In a Michael Brando movie many years ago, one of the characters said to Vivien Leigh: "You wanted to be a lady. It's a pity you can't act like one."

If the Supreme Court is an overt measure of ideals, one wonders what makes the Senate an overt measure of. As if to preclude any doubt, three senators reportedly shook Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago's hand.

The Inquirer editorial was a righteous indignation of the very disgraceful language and repugnant behavior in addressing of a senator. It was a day that will go down as a day of "infamy" in senatorial history.

—SCLEVELL
sclevell@gmail.com

Escape artists in shabu raids

NEWS STORIES ABOUT LAW ENforcers raiding a shabu laboratory are not new. The Bulacan raid was only the latest. (PDI, 12/3/06)

The police said a shabu lab and final valuable equipment (this time worth P1 billion) and materials used in making the illegal drug. After that, the usual cheering remarks: the police have made the criminals upcoming the laboratory. It's from.

It is so amazing that the police get to know the number of Chinese (?) working in the laboratory but they could not catch a single soul. Like in past raids, the operators were able to slip the police dragnet, his or her identity remaining unknown, as usual. How could the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency have missed them when the laboratory was producing 500 kilograms to nine tons of shabu?

A production as big as this (enough for the export market) is difficult to hide. Our society is known not only as poor and chaotic, but also as one of the biggest suppliers of shabu abroad. With the compromises go to the extent of losing two nights of sleep to pursue Chanot change, crime syndicates are laughing at the inconsequence of our drug enforcement agencies.

Is it because really are the priority goals of our "up countrymen"—to protect our country or their selfish interests? I should have not asked the question. With their dogged pursuit of Cha-cha, things are all very clear.

I wonder if it is just coincidence that almost the same thing happened to me. I was employed by the First National City Bank from 1946 to 1962 and by Solidbank from 1963 to 1990 as a total of 44 years. However, my contributions for 29 months of those 44 years I was employed were not recorded by the SSS. I complained, but I too have received no reply from the SSS. I don't intend to wait for even just a year.

It is time that in the beginning, the SSS had difficulty recording by hand the contributions it had received. But after about 30 years with a building full of computers, the SSS can no longer claim that it has not yet updated its posting of contributions. Maybe, retiring employees and those already retired should inquire how the SSS records of their contributions is could affect the computation of their pensions.

—AMADO C. CASARES,
7 Espina Compound,
R. Rodriguez St., Cebu City

Against abusive order, not breastfeeding

WE RESPOND TO THE LETTER TITLED "FOR mothers' anti-[topless]." (PDI, 12/6/06)

Numerous press statements similar to the letter have been issued rebutting, with virtual vehemence, the filing of the case by the Philippine Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Association of the Philippines (PHAP) on behalf of the milk industry against Health Secretary Francisco Duque, et al. before the Supreme Court. They have also announced that the case is an attempt by the milk industry to nullify the government rules protecting PHAP's economic interests.

Initially, the milk industry chose to keep silent on the matter. But the half-truths, (mis)construed and misleading facts, misplaced judgments and the downright circumspection in reasoning being peddled to the public have constrained the industry to issue this statement.

To set the record straight, PHAP and its members support and promote breastfeeding. They fully acknowledge that breastfeeding is the gold standard in infant feeding. In fact, PHAP has poured its own resources to supplement the meager P1 million budget allotted by the government for its breastfeeding awareness campaigns.

PHAP filed the case to protect the public from the unconstitutional attempt of the Department of Health to amend the Milk Code through the promulgation of Administrative Order (AO) 2006-0012, a power which is beyond its (the health department) and clearly not within respondents' mandates. The fact that the AO went beyond the scope of the Milk Code cannot be denied. The code was promulgated to regulate the advertising/promotional (labels and materials related to formula milk for infants 0-12 months old). The AO, however, covers "young children" (2 years old and beyond), and absolutely banned advertising, promotions or sponsorships of breast milk substitutes; the participation and involvement of manufacturers, distributors or representatives of products covered by the code in any activity on breastfeeding promotion; the participation of milk companies in policymaking matters concerned with the advancement of the government's breastfeeding program; the use of "health and nutrition claims" in advertisements for breastmilk substitutes; etc. These absolute and unqualified prohibitions are not provided in any of the provisions of the Milk Code.

PHAP is one with Gamboa in appealing to both the government and the public to support efforts to ensure that safety measures stated in the code, are in place.

We also would like to emphasize that the TRO secured by the milk industry does not in any manner deny the Filipino consumers their right to information and their right to be informed of the risks of formula feeding. The TRO merely seeks to prohibit the implementation of the AO.

—FELICITAS SEVERO-ARROYO,
Senior Attorneys Elena Zarate & Carmel Law Firm

A case of unrecorded SSS contributions

IN THE DEC. 12 LETTERS TO THE EDITOR section, a Social Security Service member complained about his contributions to the SSS from 1963 to 1973 [while he was employed by a radio station] and from 1973 to 2006 [when he was with a commercial bank]. He claimed that only his contributions from 1976 onward were recorded by the SSS. He said he has waited not just for 15 days [the period required by RA 8282] but for more than a year already for the SSS records to be complete.

I wonder if it is just a coincidence but almost the same thing happened to me. I was employed by the First National City Bank from 1946 to 1962 and by Solidbank from 1963 to 1990 as a total of 44 years. However, my contributions for 29 months of those 44 years I was employed were not recorded by the SSS. I complained, but I too have received no reply from the SSS. I don't intend to wait for even just a year.

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INQUIRER Northern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Rolando B. Fernandez

A century of fruitful CICM work

CICM agreed to support efforts by American missionaries to expand the Catholic reach through the northern hinterlands

By Melvin Gascon in Nueva Vizcaya
and Vincent Cabreza in Baguio City

GRIM THOUGHTS SWIRLED IN the mind of Belgian missionary Fr. Jerry Bouckaert when he and his companion, Fr. Jan Anthonissen, first set foot on a village in Natonin, Mt. Province, that sunny morning in August 1970.

FR. CONSTANCE [at gate with Bontoc warriors] in 1956. PHOTO COURTESY OF CICM CENTENNIAL EXHIBIT

BELGIAN-born Eugene Flamergh, a CICM historian now based in Baguio City.

VINCENT CABREZA

As young priests, they were deployed by Liberty to the hinterlands of Mt. Province for their mandatory "immersion" to live with indigenous Filipino tribes of the Cordillera.

Load and Filipinos of the time have feared these villagers because of stories that they practiced head headhunting.

So the priests were being introduced to the villagers who gathered in great them, Bouckaert's anxiety became more palpable.

He had noticed the reddish stains splashed on the ground and on the villager garments. He also realized that a third rail lined the bright smiles each villager gave them.

"Until, then he blood stains! Have they just eaten blood?" Bouckaert recalled asking himself.

He said it took days after their arrival when one of the local parishioners explained to them that the red stains on the ground were betel nut-chewers' spit-out while showing "normal" functions.

Accounts like Bouckaert's have emboldened generations of Belgians for nearly a century to join the Philippine missions of the Congregatio Immaculati Cordis Mariae (Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary or CICM), and refined Belgian priest Eugene Flamergh, an 86-year-old church historian now based in Baguio City.

CICM is a Roman Catholic missionary congregation founded in 1862 by Belgian priest Theophile Verbist, who hoisted a Vatican mandate calling on priests to establish a Catholic foothold in Asia and Africa as Europe endured its colonization, Flamergh said.

On Nov. 26 this year, CICM launched a yearlong countdown to its century-old presence in the Philippines in the summer capital.

CICM now eight missionaries in the Philippines in 1907, at the end of the Spanish-American War, upon the invitation of American Catholic Bishop Dennis Dougherty of the Diocese of Nueva Segovia.

The Philippine Revolution also ignited a schism within the local church, and the Iglesia Filipina Independiente of former Catholic priest Gregorio Aglipay successfully polarized the ranks of the country's Catholic laity at the time, writes anthropologist Carlos Madrid.

Although reluctant, CICM agreed to support efforts by American missionaries to expand the Catholic reach through the northern hinterlands, Madrid wrote in the unpublished book, "Stories: 1907-1972."

But the norms of the missionaries' unbelievable devotion—and, yes, their Philippine adventures—lived up the spirits of Belgian priests, Flamergh said.

He said the experience of an early about Baguio and the mountain tribes compelled him and three of his brothers to risk the country in the 1950s.

"CICM and Baguio it seems to us [were] one and the same ... For people unfamiliar with the Philippines in Belgium, when they heard 'Philippines,' it's Baguio," he said.

Few of those stories are now being told, however.

So when the highest-ranking CICM members held their first ceremonial countdown Mass at the Saint Louis University (SLU) in Baguio, Flamergh described the event as "the end of an story."

From a record high of about 1,000 CICM members, only 909 members remain throughout the world, said Bouckaert, who is the CICM district superior for Nueva Vizcaya and Quirino.

Belgium used to dominate the CICM, but their number dwindled to 300. It. Czech Greenest was the last Belgian priest Flamergh had documented dealing in a Philippine post in 1971.

Many of the Belgians have retired in Europe, although a few priests have lived out their days at the Home Scene Home in Baguio, one of the first CICM facilities built in the previous century.

Of the current CICM population, only 131 members continue to supervise CICM facilities and mission houses in the Philippines, said Bouckaert.

The countdown must also confront CICM's own division, Fr. Gerardo Cana, (a Union's CICM district superiors, said during a recent press conference.

There are only 109 Filipino CICM priests left in the country, for, a few of them separated to forge the more individualistic Missionaries of Jesus congregation, 10 years ago, Cana said.

Flamergh said this was ironic. He said CICM's "main work" in embedding the northern Philippines "has been the practice of local clergy."

CICM established the SLU and Saint Mary's University in Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya, which are now two of the largest and most influential repositories of CICM archival history.

Most importantly, Flamergh said, indigenous Filipino began welcoming their own priests.

In 1992, Fr. Alberto Duquiza, the first indigenous Filipino CICM member, was ordained.

Today, CICM is run by Congolese priest Edouard Tshibe. "For first CICM superior general, who is not Belgian, to be elected to the post," Flamergh said.

Republic of the Philippines
PHILIPPINE HEALTH INSURANCE CORPORATION
Citystate Centre, 709 Shaw Boulevard, Pasig City
Healthline 441-7444 www.philhealth.gov.ph

PHILHEALTH CIRCULAR
No. 20, s.2006

TO : ALL ACCREDITED HOSPITALS AND ALL CONCERNED

SUBJECT : Revised Survey Tools and Additional Accreditation Requirements

Due to the changes in hospital clinical requirements per Administrative Order # 311 s. 1999 as amended by Administrative Order 2006-0025 of the Department of Health (DOH), Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) is also revising its Rules for the Accreditation of Hospitals of the Philippines. Some minimal requirements are minimum requirements to ensure safety and quality of health care services being rendered to members of the National Health Insurance Program, the Corporation has added the following requirements for accreditation of hospitals:

I. Personnel

A. Minimum Complement

	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
Physician*	2 MDs for 1st 25 beds, one additional MD for every additional 5 beds	4 MDs for 1st 25 beds, one additional MD for every additional 5 beds	10 MDs for 1st 50 beds, one additional MD for every additional 5 beds	15 MDs for 1st 100 beds, one additional MD for every additional 5 beds, at least 1 Physician Specialist per specialty (Med, Surg)
Registered Nurses (RN)	2 RNs for 1st 25 beds, one additional RN for every additional 5 beds		10 RNs for 1st 50 beds, one additional RN for every additional 10 beds	
Midwife/ Nursing Aide	Midwife for 1st 5 beds, 1 for 20 beds and one additional midwife for every additional 5 beds; 1 nursing aide for every additional 5 beds	1 Midwife/nursing aide for 1st 5 beds, one additional midwife/nursing aide for every additional 10 beds		

* Any Physician assuming an administrative post shall have full-time

B. Exemption

A Level I hospital may request for exemption from the minimum requirements of "two physicians" if they are located in the following areas:

1. Poor municipalities as certified by the National Statistical Coordination Board and by the National Anti-Poverty Commission;
2. Areas with security problems;
3. Island-municipalities.

In such cases the hospital shall submit to the Corporation a copy of the Memorandum of Agreement with physician/s-in-case the duty physician is busy has to leave the hospital to ensure continuous presence of a physician in the hospital at all times.

Hospitals accepted must verify the appeal of the hospital in their respective regions before action may be undertaken by the Corporation.

C. Emergency Drugs

Listed below are the required emergency drugs in the emergency room and minimum core unit of hospitals in different levels. These drugs are grouped according to their mechanism of actions.

Level I (50 beds)	Level II (50 beds)	Level III (100 beds)	Level IV (200 beds and more)
1. Cardiogenic / Vasodilator 2. Anticonvulsant / Sedative / Antipsychotic 3. Anti-Hypertensive / Hypertensive Crisis 4. Thrombolytic / Anticoagulant 5. Cardiac Arrest / Arrhythmia 6. Pulmonary Edema / Bronchospasm 7. Anti-Histaminic / Anaphylaxis	a. Cardiogenic b. Vasodilator, Bronchodilator and Sedative c. Sedative d. Anticonvulsant e. Antihypertensive f. Hypertensive Crisis g. Thrombolytic h. Anticoagulant i. Cardiac Arrest / Arrhythmia j. Pulmonary Edema k. Bronchospasm l. Anti-Histaminic / Anaphylaxis		

Level I (50 only) | Level II (50 only) | Level II (50 and 100) | Level III (50 and 100)

III. Equipment and Instruments

I. LEVEL ONE
Outpatient Service
(10 examination / operation)

General Ancillaries / Services / Laboratory

Physician equipment:
1. Stethoscope, set
2. BP apparatus (aneroid)
3. Tongue depressor
4. Basic set (minor) sets
5. Otoscope
6. Ophthalmoscope
7. Percussion hammer

Emergency Room

1. Cervical weighting collar
2. Suction apparatus
3. Examining table with mattress
4. Laryngoscope
5. Endotracheal tubes
6. Mayo stand
7. Instrument set
8. Resuscitation bag
9. Oxygen set
10. Suturing set
11. Dressing set
12. Nebulizer
13. Intravenous infusion set
14. Laryngoscope with blade (adult and pedia)
15. Endotracheal tubes
16. Intubating stylet (adult and pedia)

Final Service

Minimal equipment:
1. Refrigerator (Pharmacy)
2. Cabinet (records)
3. Examination table
4. Weighing scale
5. Patient's bed or its equivalent

II. LEVEL TWO

Pediatric Service

1. Pediatric stethoscope
2. Sphygmomanometer (with pediatric cuff)
3. Pediatric scale
4. Otoscope
5. Ophthalmoscope
6. Tongue depressor
7. Suction apparatus
8. Examining table
9. Percussion hammer
10. Penlight
11. Nebulizer
12. Intravenous infusion set
13. Laryngoscope with blade (adult and pedia)
14. Endotracheal tubes
15. Intubating stylet (adult and pedia)

Obstetric Service

1. Sphygmomanometer (with obstetric cuff)
2. Fetoscope
3. Stethoscope
4. Delivery set
5. Suction apparatus
6. Examination table

Emergency Room Service

1. Endotracheal tubes (adult and pedia)
2. Laryngoscope blade (adult and pedia)

Delivery Service

1. Adrenalin 1mL
2. Oxytocin 10 IU equivalent
3. Patient's bed or its equivalent

IV. LEVELS THREE AND FOUR

Surgical service	Pediatric Service	Delivery Service
1. Autoclave 2. Emergency light 3. Thermometer(s) set	1. Pediatric stethoscope 2. Sphygmomanometer with pediatric cuff 3. Warm water incubator 4. Otoscope 5. Ophthalmoscope 6. Tongue depressor 7. Suction apparatus 8. Examining table 9. Neonatal ambubag 10. Pediatric laryngoscope blade 11. Pediatric endotracheal tubes	1. Adrenalin 1mL 2. Oxytocin 10 IU equivalent 3. Patient's bed or its equivalent

All other equipment not mentioned with the provisions in this issuance shall remain in full force and effect.

This circular shall take effect fifteen days (15) after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

For strict implementation.

(Sgd.) LORNA D. TALARIÑE, CESO III
Acting President and CEO

Date signed: November 28, 2006

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Palace to watch govs' Cha-cha meet

MALACAÑANG WILL ONLY WATCH AND WILL not interfere in the emergency meeting called by provincial governors on Jan. 12 to decide whether they would push for Charter change and in what mode.

Presidential adviser on political affairs Gabriel Claudio said the meeting of local government officials would help President Macapagal-Arroyo, who has initiated a new push for Charter change following the debacle of the people's initiative and consultative assembly, get the pulse of the masses on Charter change.

"The call of some governors for an 'emergency meeting' to arrive at a common position on Charter change is a matter purely internal to the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (ULAP)," said Claudio in a text message.

Claudio stressed that the "Palace was not informed nor consulted about such a meeting nor does it intend to intervene."

The Palace had previously taken a direct hand in previous Charter change undertakings such as heading the information campaign for the people's initiative early this year and backing a caucus of congressmen in finalizing their ill-fated attempt to convene a constituent assembly into the Senate.

Proxies

Whatever the local government officials decide at the meeting is expected to have a bearing on the Palace's stand on the issue. "We do recognize Ulap as a most significant and effective umbrella organization and forum to gauge the sentiments not only of local executives but also the constituencies and communities they represent on key national issues not the least of which is constitutional reform," Claudio said.

Rosie Tan, Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson's one-line announcement that members of the League of Provinces of the Philippines have agreed to sit down on Jan. 12 and discuss the governors' stand on whether to push for Charter change and what mode should be taken, Ulap is the proxy group of all representatives of local governments officials such as councilors, board members, mayors, vice mayors, vice governors, and governors.

Over the next two weeks, the governors are expected to consult extensively with their constituencies from barangay leaders, civil groups and church officials on their stand on Charter change.

Commitment

The President declared last week that Charter change remained a "political commitment" and that she was open to any of the three modes—people's initiative, constituent assembly, and constitutional convention—available to achieve this end.

But while Malacañang has decided to take a hands-off policy on the governors' meeting, the President's party Kampi and its former chair, Interior and Local Government Secretary Ronaldo Puno, have reportedly started out a campaign among local executives to file with the Commission on Elections a second petition for a people's initiative in a simple and direct formula calling for a nonelected congress with a presidential leadership to conform to the original petition made by Ulap and the Sigaw ng Bayan which was rejected by the Supreme Court last October.

While the first petition was dished by the High Court, proponents of this mode argue that RA 6735 [the Initiative and Referendum Act] as an enabling law.

SLOW CHRISTMAS
A girl and her grandmother wait at the doorsteps of their home in Barangay Canlaurora in Manoc Pateros, Quinarca, for the arrival of the girl's father from a day of fishing at sea. Fishermen in the area have returned to their only source of livelihood following the Petron oil spill in the province.

NPA reb slain in clash in Compostela Valley

DAVAO CITY—A COMMUNIST rebel was killed when government troops and members of the New People's Army (NPA) clashed in Sitio Mahayahay, Barangay San Jose in Monkayo town, Compostela Valley yesterday morning.

The clash happened in the Commission Party of the Philippines celebrated its 38th anniversary yesterday.

The slain rebel remains unidentified but the military said he was in his early 30s.

Col. Benito M. Lim, spokesperson of the military's 10th Infantry Division, said the clash came after the suspension of the government-declared ceasefire for the Christmas season.

"After the suspension, the military operations against the NPA continued and this is the result of it," De Leon said.

The military official said the operation, which lasted for more than 30 minutes, was made by personnel of the 20th IB which operates in the Compostela Valley area.

The rebels, he said, were led by one Commander Dan Buddy of the NPA's Front Committee 3 of the Southern Kindanao Regional Committee.

Last week, a top official of the NPA in Colombia town in Sultan Kudarat was killed in another military operation in that town's Barangay Datal Blao.

Killed was Catalino Tandoc, also known as Ayo, secretary of the 80th Far South Mindanao Region. Also killed were rebels the military only identified as Dexter and Brigol.

Mendiola, Jorge Madlos, spokesperson of the National Democratic Front in Mindanao, told the Inquirer in a telephone interview that the NPA in Mindanao launched about 600 offensives in the region compared to last year's 180, taking off with about 300 firearms.

Madlos said the CPP in Mindanao has 17 fronts covering 18 provinces, 200 towns and cities, while the NPA is present in the 18 provinces on the island.

The CPP's Mindanao Commission disclosed in its annual report that some 200 soldiers, police, militiamen and bandits were killed while 320 were wounded in 2006.

But Madlos also admitted that about 30 NPA rebels were killed and 20 others were wounded this year. Jeffery Ogsos and Grace Arbasis, Inquirer Mindanao

1,000-day countdown to centennial of Baguio City in 2009 starts

BAGUIO CITY—TEENAGERS IN tradersi headbands and G-strings raised the flag at City Hall recently to mark Day One of a thousand-day countdown to the summer capital's centennial in September 2009.

The American colonial government raised Baguio from the ground up out of pastureland used by Dulci herdsmen, using an urban design of Chicago architects Daniel Burnham.

Baguio old-timers honored the city's forefathers with the simultaneous launching of freshly painted markers, a bust parade at Burnham Lake and the planting of centennial trees at Burnham Park.

But people must wait much more into that symbolism.

Retired city architect Joseph Alabanza, chair of the 10-man centennial commission, said they have decided to celebrate Baguio's centennial as a three-year continuing advocacy for policies that would protect its American and Dulci heritage.

To do this, the city government has imposed rules to convince four neighboring Benguet towns to join a metropolitan setup.

Alabanza announced at a recent press conference that the city government was reviving the proposed fusion of Baguio and La Trinidad, Tuba, Itogon, Sablan and Tuba, all Benguet towns, into a FLIT metropolis.

Alabanza, a former Cordillera director of the National Economic and Development Authority, has been pushing for the project since the term of former President Fidel Ramos.

Dwindling water

The Americans designed Baguio as a sophisticated community for 20,000 residents, but the city now no longer has the carrying capacity to host future investments as evidenced by its dwindling water reserves, Alabanza said.

The city's neighbors could benefit from investments Baguio would lose entry, however, he said.

Everyone, Americans and Asian experts translated BLIST into annual development plans. They understands the Baguio-Cagayan urban development projects to rehabilitate the city after it was devastated by a killer earthquake in July 1990.

The centennial commission will also serve as a sounding board for plans and policies to improve downtown Baguio. These include the conversion of downtown streets into pedestrian parks as well as the ban on giant billboards from the central business district "because they become (sources of) visual pollution," Alabanza said. Vincent Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon

A STERN-looking World War II veteran brought color to the launching of a thousand-day countdown to Baguio's centennial on 2009. He, and several others, carried blue balloons which they released for luck.

Hunt down killers of activists, CPP orders NPA rebels

Rebellion A1

The Left has blamed the killings of activists to generals, like Jovito Palparan and Romeo Tolentino.

The military has denied having a hand in the killings, saying those killed were not fans of communist purge carried out by the communist rebels.

National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales has also been blamed by militants for the assassinations. He denied involvement in the recent spate of killings, saying that "our campaign is to lead them to court, not kill them."

But the CPP said the harassment and intimidation "hardly is to denounce the intended victims as communists and, after they are killed, to blame the communists for killing them in a purge."

Victims

From January 2001 to Dec. 22, a total of 803 militants have fallen victim to political killings, according to the human rights watchdog Karapatan. The Inquirer has recorded 184 victims.

About half of the victims belonged to activist groups and the Bayan Muna party. Another 206 people were abducted during the period and remained missing, Karapatan said.

Last week, Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Satur Ocampo revealed Ophie Binibin Leya B, the latest military murder plan to finish off the communist front group before 2008.

"This is how merciless and ruthless the Oplan is at national and international laws. Civilians—more than 800 killed since 2001, have been targets of this so-called counterinsurgency operation plan," Ocampo said in a statement.

On Friday, Francisco Ramong, head of Bayan Muna-Sorsogon, was shot dead by three men in Bonsol, Sorsogon.

Shot dead days earlier were Bayan Muna member Cpl. Felimon Ala and Bayan Muna lawyer Gil Ipeol in the town of Bonis and Quezon.

"The successive slaying of Felimon Ocpol and Ramong shows the military's Oplan Bantay Laya in action in Sorsogon," said Ocampo, also the Bayan Muna president.

Spiral of violence

The Geneva-based human rights group Amnesty International has denounced the killings of activists and warned in its year-end Persecution Bingo, pegged between all-out war against the rebels since the threat of "retaliatory assassinations" by insurgents and the "prospect of a spiral of violence and chaos."

Ms Arroyo has spoken against the killings and formed a fact-finding commission to investigate them. The Melo Commission has finished its work but still has to submit its findings and recommendations to the President.

In anticipation of guerrilla attacks on the CPP's anniversary, the military declared a nationwide alert.

Maj. Gen. Jose Angel Honrado, military spokesperson, said the AFP was "ready for them."

"In fact, our target is to finish them off before 2008," he told reporters.

The government suspended military offensives against the NPA on Dec. 24 until the midnight of Dec. 25. It will suspend offensives again on Dec. 31 until the midnight of Jan. 1.

But the communist rebels, however, cite no reason for their avoidance a holiday truce.

The NPA currently has 7,100 fighters and influence in 1,113 villages across the archipelago, according to the chief of staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon.

The rebels, however, say they have the equivalent of 27 battalions or about 13,500 full-time fighters with high-powered rifles, and not backed by "tens of thousands" of militias nationwide.

The CPP claims the NPA now operates in more than 120 guerrilla fronts.

In 2004, the rebels withdrew from peace talks, accusing the government of instigating their inclusion in the US and European lists of terror groups.

New cadres

The CPP also called on its forces to recruit new cadres to intensify the armed revolution.

The party said more cadres and members were needed to "raise the revolutionary struggle to a new and higher level."

It urged the NPA to step up offensives against government troops and to seize more arms from the enemy to enable to form more platoons and build more guerrilla fronts.

The CPP stressed the need for "a larger number of party cadres and members in order to carry out various types of work among the millions of people and raise the revolutionary struggle to a new and higher level."

"We must strive to advance from the early to the middle phase of the strategic defensive by multiplying the platoons and the guerrilla fronts, and improving command at the levels of the regional and guerrilla fronts," the CPP said.

The fighting between the NPA and government forces has already claimed the lives of more than 40,000 people. With reports from Norman Bordadora and Cecilia T. Michael Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon and AP

KIDS WILL BE KIDS
Child's recreation of homeless by Supertyphoon "Reming" find room and time to play at an evacuation center in Barangay Busay in Daraga, Albay on Christmas Day. The toys were donated by Rotary International and Rotarettes, a British charity. AFP

No RP-US war games? 'Minimal to significant losses' expected

By Rowena Dayao
Inquirer Central Luzon

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—"Minimal to significant losses" in the economies of Clark and Angeles City in Pampanga and the Subic Bay Freeport and Olongapo City in Zambales are expected as a result of the cancellation of next year's RP-US war games.

According to Philippine officials to negotiate a new agreement, nearly 10,000 troops are known to take part in the annual Balikatan exercises. These troops are distributed in the cited areas, as well as in Isabel Magsaysay in Nueva Ecija, Langley Fone in Cavite, and the province of Palawan and Iloilo, availing themselves of various services during its stay in the country.

Lory Lota, president and chief executive officer of Clark Development Corp. (CDC), estimated a 20 percent decline in the income of tourism-related businesses in this economic zone.

But in Manila, Balikatan is not being dragged over the US government's cancellation of Balikatan 2007—a direct result of the custody dispute involving convicted rapist Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith.

"I don't think the United States will put at stake its close relations with the Philippines just for a rape case," said National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales.

"We want to embark on the as our defense agreement is concerned, but it has nothing to do with the United States being unhappy with the Philippines," he said.

Down the drain

CDC's Lota could not immediately cite in peso terms the projected lost income, but sources in the business community said Balikatan has been about ready to lose sour revenues for 60 days as a result of the scrapping of the 25-day joint military exercises.

Holiday hotel daily rates for rooms amount to more than P4,000, and for villas, about P10,000.

Moneychers and Forums are also known to rent out their rooms and villas to US troops.

While landing fees for US military aircraft are waived at the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport in Pampanga, CDC's share of the windfall from the fuel consumption Lubewell will go down the drain, said Hotel Jose Lacsina, president of Clark International Airport Corp.

Some 20 restaurants, 15 duty-free stores and about 100 traders of souvenir items are also sure to feel the pinch.

"The impact will be significant," Lacsina said in the interim.

Said Lota: "It is unfortunate that the Balikatan could be suspended."

Capt. Russell Haines, spokesperson of the US Marines, had earlier said each American soldier spent an average of $50 ($2,460) daily on food and drinks.

But Angeles Mayor Carmelo Lazatin said his city just outside the former US air base in Clark would lose "very minimal and insignificant losses" because only between 25 and 50 servicemen were "off base" together.

"Most of them stay inside Clark," Lazatin said, adding that the 5,000 tourists who flocked to the city daily were mostly Europeans and Asians.

Rand R

But on Fields Avenue, Angeles' red-light district, a few owners said Lazatin could be underestimating the consequences.

"The girls won't get customers," the bar owner said, referring to the practice of "rest and recreation" sometimes of transporting sex workers to cater and taking them to the US servicemen's quarters in Clark.

Bar many soldiers, traveling in groups of five and escorted by the local police and military, are known to prefer savoring the local cuisine in restaurants declared "relatively safe from terror threats."

Filomeno Salonga, chair of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority, said the tourism sector in the free port would likely feel the brunt of lost income.

"Just in one day, we calculated [the airdrop's expenditures at between P2 million and P3 million on food, souvenir items and hotel use," Salonga said.

He said this was enough compensation for the shelling they missed. But US warships that arrive at Subic's Alongapo Pier

"Missile ring respectively. [The losses will be big]," Salonga said.

In Olongapo, a war drives cost around 300 others. She himself closed to lose transport contracts.

He said the EI military usually paid P1,000 for a day's use of a van.

Like Salonga, Olongapo Mayor James Gordon Jr. said he expected the economic loss to be great.

Gordon said that during the last Balikatan exercise when US personnel were first allowed to spend "liberty" in the city, they spent P5 million a day, with each soldier spending an average of $200 (P1,441).

In Fort Magsaysay, military commanders said about 30 exams and 10 months of nonwar items expect a slump in sales.

But not everyone is unhappy.

Mayor Bolanos, chairman of the division of the women's group Bailed in Olongapo, said the cancellation of the Balikatan would spare her workers in the city from sexual exploitation.

Calibrated response

In a phone interview, Gonzales said the EI government makes its basis were calibrated in response to Smith's continuing incarceration at the Makati City Jail.

He said the US government had been limiting its responses to matters that pertain to the VF-US Visiting Force Agreement, such as the way persons scheduled in February.

"The EO is just forced ... So [cause] the Balikatan] because it involves the VFA. That VFA is relief they can only touch, and the failure to transfer Smith [to the custody of the US Embassy] is part of the VFA. If the agreement of our honored, they have no choice but to suspend it as well as [canceling the SEAL exit or the Balikatan," he said.

Gonzales said the US government might also hold back millions aid to the Philippines while the legal dispute over Smith's custody continued.

But he downplayed the impact of this factor on the overall Get Into relations, saying the US government had "not very substantial military aid" to the country since the Philippine Senate voted in 1991 not to renew the tenure of the American military bases in Clark and Subic.

Since Dec. 4

Since his incarceration at the Makati Jail on Dec. 4, the day he was convicted by Judge Benjamin Pozon of raping a Filipino woman, Smith through his lawyers had been asking the courts to release him to EI custody pending completion of the appeals process.

In seeking his request, the US Embassy with the Philippine justice and foreign affairs departments consenting, has cited the legal protection provision in the VFA.

Shortly after the cancellation of the Balikatan was announced, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said he hoped that there would be a quick resolution of the custody case, and that the Court of Appeals would consider the country's "international commitment" under the VFA. With a report from GB C. Cabuenas in Manila

NEW PEOPLE'S ARMY rebels in Bicol to Agencia del Sur, mark an anniversary of their long-running struggle. AP

Once needy Pinoy family now givers, not recipients

SUSANO, CALIF.—BY THE 20 YEARS William Arthur's students have gathered boxes of food and toys to help needy families through the fund's Holiday Basket program. They never met the people they helped—until now.

The Washington Elementary School fifth-graders recently found themselves face to face with Sarah Quisumbing, a 38-year-old mother of three. As tears welled up in her eyes, she stood in front of the class and told the children how much joy the efforts of kids just like them brought her family at a time of great need.

"I was so touched by the children's gesture that I wanted to share my story," Quisumbing said.

Living day by day

It began in 2000, when she emigrated from the Philippines with her two sons, Triston and Yuri Nicolo, to join her husband, Trudy.

An architect in the Philippines, Ray Quisumbing pursued a design career in the United States. Once his family arrived, immigration processing fees and bills mounted. Those early days were tough, Soon after her arrival, Quisumbing became pregnant with her daughter, Tiera Isabella, nine.

"At first, it was like trying to make ends meet," Quisumbing said. "Living day by day."

That same year, the Quisumbings became enrolled in the Basket Basket program, a citywide effort since 1948 to aid homes in crisis families. It's organized by the Basket Coordinating Council with support from city organizations, churches, businesses, school PTAs and students like Arthur's.

"We were just building our lives here," Quisumbing said. "And their were these wonderful people that lived to give something special for some people that they didn't know."

Quisumbing said her children were outside when they received their toy truck, coloring set and other treats, and sang for more and more again. "Where did the gifts come from?"

American dream

Six years later, the Quisumbings are thriving. Three years ago, Sarah Quisumbing began living the American dream. Although times are good, they haven't forgotten Clerk Bon Christmas in the United States and the kindness of strangers.

When the opportunity arose for Sarah Quisumbing to once again participate in the Holiday Basket program—the time as a volunteer helping others—she signed up immediately and got her children involved in gathering food.

"I know how it feels," Quisumbing said. "We've all blessed that now we're able to help somebody."

Burbank Coordinating Council member Nelson Bates, the program's chair for 14 years, said this year's effort helped more than 2,000 people, and that stories such as Quisumbing's are more common than people might think.

"I can only tell you what [volunteers] have said to me," Bates said. "They say 'You know why I do this? Because I was a recipient at one time."

Gift from the heart

Arthur's students participate because he wants them to truly appreciate and take pride in the gift of giving, from gathering the food, decorating the boxes and selecting the toys to writing a parody version of "The 12 Days of Christmas," full of food-inspired lyrics—"five onion rings!"

At an annual presentation, the children hand over boxes of food and toys and sing their song for PTA volunteers. This year, Quisumbing was part of that group. One by one, the volunteers thanked the children, until it was Quisumbing's turn to speak.

As the children listened intently, she told them about the power of their work and the greatest gift any family could ever hope to receive—one given from the heart. Nine Stark
Times-News Service

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CARNIVAL rides operations in Marikina City have been suspended following an accident on the popular octopus ride (shown in photo) on Christmas Day. EDGAR N. MATIAS/PDI

Deadly carnival ride

1 dead, 6 hurt as cart device fails

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

A FREE DAY ENDED IN tragedy after four cars fell off a carnival ride, killing a 10-year-old girl and injuring six other children in Marikina City on Christmas Day.

The four carts of the octopus ride in a small carnival at the Marikina Riverpark in barangay Jesus de la Peña crashed to the ground after the metal rotator holding them broke, initial investigation showed.

Mayor Marides Fernando quickly suspended the operation of all the carnivals operating in the city for the holiday season to give way to an investigation and inspection of all the rides. The operators of the ride are now detained at the city police station while the registered owners is still at large, police said.

The fatality was identified as Katherine Diana Pizzardo. Her father Greg told reporters.

Pizzardo said he and his wife Geraldine took eight of their nine children from their home in Cainta, Rizal to the riverpark on Monday afternoon to see the bazaars.

"They told me they would just buy gifts so I allowed them to go. The next time I looked for them, they were already on the ride," he said. Katherine first got on a cart with her older sister Kristine. They got off later, but when it was her eldest sister Kimberly's turn, Katherine again went up to join her.

Pizzardo said he heard a loud thud, then, people started rushing to the octopus ride. "I saw my two daughters on the ground. The cart they were on was one of the carts which fell," he added.

Katherine died while undergoing treatment at the Amang Rodriguez Memorial Medical Center yesterday. Pizzardo said doctors told her the girl's liver had been crushed, possibly because of the impact which pinned her frail body against the cart's metal frame.

Kimberly on the other hand, remained in serious condition and is now confined in Bicutan City.

The other victims who sustained bruises and wounds were identified as Chenalyn Reyes, 12; Robin Tenajos, 13; and his brother Rudy, 16; Raymund Aliagara, 17; and his brother Ronald, 13.

Fernando said the ride had all the necessary permits. But she has already ordered an investigation not only of the operators of the ride, but also the officials which should have inspected the ride.

DRAGON FIREWORKS

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www.dragonfireworks.com

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Greet 2007 with a bang, but it pays to be careful

By Tina G. Santos

FOR MANY FILIPINOS, INCLUDing the New Year would not be complete without a loud and colorful fireworks display to usher in the month, many unscrupulous end up victims of firecracker injuries.

To lessen the number of firecracker blast victims in Manila this year, the city police force will launch an intensified information drive on the safe and proper way of handling fireworks.

Fire Senior Supt. Danilo Sharoon, Manila Police District (MPD) acting director, however, the best way of greeting the New Year is by using noisemakers like pots, pans or banging on pots and pans.

Sharoon reminded the public that innocent children have lost their limbs, even their lives, because of firecrackers.

He urged residents to report the presence of banned firecrackers to avoid injuries during New Year's Eve.

Among the banned firecrackers are pla-pla, kwa chanko and super lolo.

Sharoon said those buying firecrackers should check the labels for the explosive chemicals content of the product, the directions or how to use them safely, and the name and address of the manufacturer.

He, however, admitted that there is no law that penalizes those who use the illegal — an improvised cannon fashioned out of PVC pipe which is considered a deadly weapon.

The huge mix of a loud explosion when the user ignites denatured alcohol at the tail end of the pipe and then lights up the mixture with a cigarette lighter or a gas stove ignites that can be activated at the click of a triggering mechanism.

"Perhaps we could just remind the children on its proper use to prevent accidents and casualties," Sharoon said.

He also gave other tips for the safe celebration of the coming year:

• Do not light fireworks near persons, buildings or combustible objects.

• Any firecracker that does not go off after it is lit should be immediately and properly disposed of.

• All fireworks should be stored in a safe place.

• Keep fireworks such as sparklers, bottom rockets and related families (type of firecracker) out of children's reach.

• Avoid holding a firecracker while you are lighting it. Avoid the lighting device (a match stick or cigarette) to a stick or pole instead.

• Do not throw firecrackers at people, passing vehicles and combustible materials.

• Do not light firecrackers inside containers which can explode and produce splinters or shrapnel.

• And as important, as with driving, if you are drinking liquor, keep away from firecrackers.

DECEMBER
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24/31 OPEN	25	26 OPEN	27	28	29	30 OPEN

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Japanese man dies in fall from Makati condo

POLICE are investigating the cause of the death of a Japanese national whose body was found near the pool area of one of the Rockwell condominiums in Makati City. Investigators are looking at the possibility that the man, who lived on the 25th floor of the 41-story Manansala building, could have jumped to his death. AMY ALIPIO

By Tarra N. Quismundo

A WATCHMAN OF THE MANSION Building in Makati City's upscale Rockwell Center was startled by a loud thud coming from the seventh floor at 9:30 a.m. yesterday.

When he checked the area, he saw the lifeless body of a man lying near the pool area on the seventh floor. The man was identified as Kazuyuki Ito, a Japanese citizen, around 30 to 35 years old. He lived on the 25th floor of the 41-story building and reportedly worked for the Japanese Embassy, police said.

"We are looking at suicide right now. He stood by himself in the condominium but we don't know yet if there was anyone else in the room when it happened," Supt. Gilbert Cruz, Makati police chief, told the Inquirer.

Cruz said initial data gathered at the site of the incident indicated that Ito may have leapt from the unit as it was only one-sided had its windows open.

He added that the area where Ito may have jumped from was so small it had no room for another person.

"The window was the only one open. So may have said hung from the ledge and let go, because there was really no that much space there," Cruz said.

According to the police, at 9:16 a.m., just 20 minutes before the body was found on the seventh floor, Ito called up his driver Sammy Celestino, who was then waiting at the ground floor.

Ito instructed Celestino to get ready because he would be picking up something, although he did not say what it was, Cruz said.

"He didn't know he (driver) was going to pick up the body of his employer," he added.

Cruz said his initial focus on the concrete he about a foot.

Facelift for Taguig lakeshore

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE LAKESHORE TOWNS IN Taguig City will soon be restored to their old glory as preparations for their transferring on one of the premier tourist destinations in the metropolis are now underway.

The local government has signed a memorandum of agreement with the Laguna Lake Development Authority for the joint development of the historic Laguna de Bay shoreline running from Bonifacio Naval Station—home of the legendary lighthouse—to Barangay Bagumbayan.

The MOA calls for the establishment, ownership and operation of a joint venture corporation which would declare, promote and develop Taguig's lakeshore as a business, commercial and tourism development zone to boost the city economy and provide employment and business opportunities to residents.

The city's public information office said the "Lakeshore Development Authority" has been created after a years—featuring a marina, a boardwalk, a floating promenade, love memorial, a fish port and a tourist-oriented resort—among others.

Work is in the early 70s, Barangay Hagonoy's shoreline was the heaviest destruction of many locals, among them celebrities, politicos. They swam in the once clear waters of Laguna de Bay or played in the sandy beach until lighthouse which stands guard at the lake, near the mouth of the Ilog River and the Napindan Channel.

In a previous interview with Lilia Meza, an old resident of Napindan, who is the barangay secretary, she told the Inquirer that many residents have been waiting for the local government to act on its plans to restore the beauty of their lakeshore towns.

But the wait is over. Ana Ilao, chief of the public information office, told the Inquirer yesterday that residents could expect work on the project to begin in the next few months.

Mayor Freddie Tinga had come up with the idea of inviting the "Old Town" disaster of Taguig after he won the mayoralty in 2004. Tinga added that the local government would be spending a "huge amount of money" to finance the project.

Cop killer known to victim?

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE FORMER MANILA POLICEman who was shot to death last Friday may have known one of his assailants, according to a report of Task of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI).

NBI Deputy Director for Regional Operations Servieto Reynaldo Estimulda said two witnesses disclosed that the victim, Edgardo Castro, had argued with one of the suspects at the parking lot of the Harmon Plaza mall in Malate, Manila, before he was shot dead.

The witnesses told Armando Landas, Castro's alleged companion, tried to mediate when the former policeman and the suspect began arguing heated. In "Suddenly, a second suspect entered the scene and shot Castro and Landas in the head," Estimulda said.

Castro died on the spot while Landas was declared dead on arrival at the Ospital ng Maynila.

Witnesses saw the first suspect shoot Castro in the back and fled with his companion on board an motorcycle driven by a tricycle.

In an earlier interview, Estimulda said he may have seen the gunman before the incident at the coffee shop of the mall's Cocoon Pub Hotel.

The NBI official, who was leaving barely five days in the coffee shop, said he had seen a man answering an stranger handful size. The man seemed to be looking for someone at the smoking area. Estimulda said Castro initially sat in the smoking area whenever he met with colleagues.

The NBI official has requested for copies of the hotel's close-circuit television footages that could show the suspect.

Estimulda said they would ask the witnesses, one of them a parking boy who asked for a Christmas tip from the gunman, for help in identifying the suspect.

Initial information gathered by the NBI showed that Castro had worked at the controversial Presidential Anti-Illegal Recruitment Task Force (PARTF) headed by former Philippine Overseas Employment Administration director Bernadito Ano.

Castro was also detained at the NBI as a special investigator when it was headed by Attorney Leo Jose who is now a senator, Estimulda said.

Shooting, stabbing cases spoil Yule mood

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE HOLIDAYS USUALLY BRING out the best in people, but this was not the case in certain areas of metro Manila on Christmas Day.

Records from the Southern Police District's Tactical Operations Center showed that at least four people were killed while two were hurt in separate shooting and stabbing incidents on Dec. 25.

The first incidents took place at midnight at the Centennial Village in Taguig City, where three brothers who ganged up on a Jay Baladerog stabbed him for no apparent reason. The suspects were identified as Rudy and Mark Antonio and Gelando Ana Pante.

Baladerog was rushed to the Ospital ng Makati where he received treatment for a stab wound in the chest area.

Three hours later, a 16-year-old high school student was stabbed to death by self-confessed suspects inside his tricycle's jeep. Based on initial investigation, Jonathan Carbo was just about to sleep inside the vehicle when the suspect, who was in the driver's seat, attacked him.

Carbo sustained a stab wound in his chest. He was brought to the Bautz City General Hospital, where he was declared dead upon arrival.

A 21 year-old man was also stabbed dead by a neighbor as he was partying with his friends in Barangay Cupang, Muntinlupa City, SPO1 Roy Quiñon identified the victim as Joel Cagaoin. Police are still looking for the suspect, Jerome Abelit, who reportedly ran away after the incident, Quiñon said.

Meanwhile, a drinking spree turned deadly on Pildita D in Pasay City at around 8 p.m. on Christmas Day after several guests—one of whom identified as Ronald Rosanes—and his friend Sherwin Pastrana.

The two groups drove rooms at each other but one of the suspects, only identified as Ronel, drew out his gun and began shooting at the victims. Rolando was killed while Pastrana was injured.

An hour later, a policeman, identified as PO2 Israel Perigon allegedly went berserk and began firing at a group of men drinking inside the KNP Sauna canteen. He is in Muntinlupa City. A man, identified as Alfredo Nicolas was hit in the face and died on the spot.

METROBRIEFS

Man shoots uncle

A FAMILY reunion turned tragic when a man shot and seriously injured his uncle in front of their other relatives on Christmas Day in Caloocan City. The victim identified the suspect as Jay Cordero, 23. He reportedly shot his uncle, Ernesto Cordero, 63, on concrete intersection in the gun-friendly area. Responding police, the youngest Cordero suspected his uncle of influencing the decision about his girlfriend's alleged involvement in drugs. Ernesto sustained a gunshot wound in his left thigh and was taken to undergo treatment. Police were pursuing the two suspects after the shooter fled.

Nancy C. Carvajal

Fire and be fired

FIRE and an heat. Because the municipal Senior Supt. Danilo Martinez, acting chief of the Manila Police District, he has been in a position to fire that gone during the New Year's Eve celebration. Also, may problema pa ang pulis na nakipagbarilan sa kalaban ng mga may-ari ng mga kuwitis na pinaputok sa ibabaw ng mga bahay. The officials also urged the base to report immediately people who indiscriminately fire a gun, whether they are policemen or civilians.

Tarra C. Santos

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DID YOU KNOW

PEOPLE DIED ALONE. A total of 98,719 Filipinos are considered nationwide. Almost half of them (51,168) answered in Metro Manila, followed by Southern Tagalog, which had the second most number of fires at 9,971. Of the 19 other regions, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao had the least number of fires incidents at 183.

Cyril J. Bonalaan, Inquirer Research

Suspects tagged in mall robbery

By DJ Yap

AT LEAST THREE SUSPECTS IN THE Christmas Day heist at the Ever Gotesco mall in Quezon City have been identified, but the police refused to name them to avoid jeopardizing follow up operations.

"They are members of a syndicate known to stage large-scale armed robberies in commercial establishments around Metro Manila," said Senior Supt. Hegesippo Cambulin, director of the Quezon City Police District.

He added that the suspects, who were killed in the police's "cogon gallery," matched the descriptions provided by eyewitnesses posted at the mall.

Secrecy

But he declined to identify the suspects, citing the need for secrecy in allow investigators to monitor the group's whereabouts.

On Monday, about nine heavily armed robbers in fake Special Weapons And Tactics uniforms were inside the mall on Commonwealth Avenue at past 7 a.m., saying they were responding to a threat in the building.

They disarmed and bagged the guards and entered the treasury office on the second floor, where they opened and emptied a vault containing the mall's weekend sales and the employees' payroll.

Police did not say how much was taken, but said it could run to millions of pesos.

Ethiopia fighter jets strafe Mogadishu airports

NAIROBI, KENYA—AN ETHIOPIAN fighter jet strafed Mogadishu's airport on Monday in a stinging show of force that took the growing conflict in the Horn of Africa to Somalia's capital for the first time.

Across the country, Somalia's Islamist leaders contended that they were rapidly losing territory to the forces of Somalia's internationally recognized transitional government.

In Beledweyne, a town near the Ethiopian border, residents evacuated the area there had been before Islamist calls, and even a day after the Islamist forces pulled out, a truck loading chat, a mildly narcotic leaf that the Islamists had outlawed, pulled in. In the market to a burst of cheers.

"It was wonderful to see that truck," said Sheik Abdi Bawaa, a vendor of spare parts.

The fighting between Somalia's transitional government and the country's powerful Islamist movement, based in Mogadishu, has been raging on and off for nearly a week.

On Sunday, Ethiopia officially joined the hostilities, with the tacit blessings of the United States, bombing Islamist positions in several Somalian towns and pushing ground troops deep into Somali territory. Ethiopian officials said they sided with the transitional government because the Islamists, whom American officials have accused of harboring Qaida operatives, posed a threat to the region.

On Monday, witnesses in Mogadishu said that at least Ethiopian fighter jets soared over the Under Secure around 9 a.m., fired machine guns at the parking lot of the international airport, which was mostly empty, and bombed close by once.

The attack was apparently meant to be more a demonstration of military might than a destructive mission, the only reported casualty was an injured pedestrian who was slightly injured. It did, however, have the intended effect of shutting the airport down as Pacific Airlines, one of the last carriers to fly into Somalia, promptly canceled all service.

Witnesses said four more Ethiopian fighter planes then attacked a second, unmanned military airport west of Mogadishu, where the Islamist forces stored their heavy weapons and ammunition.

Ethiopian officials said they were following specific instructions by the transitional government to send Somalia's bankers to four foreign fighters. According to UN officials, the Islamists are supported by several thousand Eritreans, Libyans, Sudanese and Somalis who have responded to the call of a holy war against Ethiopia, a christian-led country. AFP

THE DOG, THE CAT AND THE MOUSE ATOP THE CAT
Greg Pike's dog Booger, cat Kicki and white-necked Mouse, rest at the end of a ride in Bisbee, Arizona, Dec. 24.

Cuba awaits diagnosis on Castro

HAVANA—CUBA WAS ON TENterhooks Monday over Fidel Castro's fragile health, as members of the Communist island awaited a visiting Spanish doctor's diagnosis on whether additional surgery is needed.

Officials in Madrid confirmed Monday that a Spanish surgeon had been dispatched to Cuba to treat Castro, 80, who has not been seen in public for five months. Two medical updates have been made public since his reported intestinal surgery.

The Cuban government decided to call one of our top professionals to save the life of comrade," Manuel Lozada, health councilor for Madrid's regional government, told reporters.

"What a government asks for today or collaboration, besides officials requested," he added, signaling he could be dispatched soon.

Separately, Spain's Cadena Ser radio described Garcia as a well-known specialist in digestive problems.

Castro's brother, veteran leader Raul Castro, has said the Cuban leader's internal continues recuperation but has cautioned citizens from the public eye has fueled widespread speculation that he may be seriously ill and perhaps even near death.

Dr. Jerome of Hernandez Medicine Juan Stipp parente told the newspaper The Washington Post earlier this month that Castro was likely to survive "months, not years."

News reports late last week said the Cuban leader was too ill to receive his friend, Nobel Prize-winning Colombian author Gabriel Garcia Marquez, who was on the island for nearly a month. AFP

Israel orders easing of Palestinian restrictions

JERUSALEM—ISRAEL'S PRIME Minister Ehud Olmert ordered Monday new "immediate easing of restrictions" on Palestinians, including the removal of dozens of roadblocks across the occupied West Bank.

"The prime minister ordered the immediate easing of restrictions on the Palestinian population in order to strengthen the moderate elements and in accordance with the agreements reached during his meeting with Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas," an Olmertite, his office said in a statement.

Olmert gave the green light for the measures following talks last meeting with Defense Minister Amir Peretz and the heads of the security establishment, who drew up a plan under which "a series of easing measures will be given to the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza."

Several "immediate" steps will be taken, including the easing of traffic of goods into the Palestinian territories and setting more entry permits into Israel, the statement said.

Speaking earlier before the parliament's powerful foreign affairs and defense committee, Peretz said Olmert would ultimately be his minister and roadblocks in the West Bank in two phases—24 at first, and the rest later.

Palestinians travelling are on the West Bank are forced daily to go through dozens of checkpoints manned by the Israeli army in a vital to keep out militants.

The announced measures are seen as an attempt by Israel to bolster Abbas and his Fatah government in the face of a bitter power struggle with the radical Hamas-led Palestinian government. AFP

Japan woman who blasted neighbor with music jailed

TOKYO—A JAPANESE WOMAN CHARGED with inflicting injury on her neighbors by blasting rock music at her house for more than two years was given a 20-month sentence on a Tuesday, a court official said.

Miyoko Watanabe, 59, was sentenced by the Osaka High Court, revoking an initial ruling that had given her a one-year prison term, court spokesperson Tokuro Kawasaki said.

Residents in Higashi-Nada Prefecture (state) in western Japan, was accused of causing insomnia and headaches to her next-door neighbor by playing loud dance music almost 24 hours a day on a portable stereo she had positioned in her neighbor's house, an anchor said.

She was arrested on April 11, 2005. The two women had had a number of disagreements before police did not elaborate on.

"The defendant ignored calls by local authorities and continuously played music at a high volume for some 20 months," Ryuzo Sawa, agency-appointed president, judge H. Sawa, presiding over the case, told the court.

In handing down a longer prison term than a local court ruling in April, this year, the judge said that the court "felt the defendant "still maintains a hostile attitude toward the victim and it is highly likely she will commit the crime again," Ryuzo said. AP

With $1B already wasted, more Katrina abuse yet to emerge

By Hope Yen

WASHINGTON—ALREADY AT $1 billion, the tally for Hurricane Katrina waste and fraudulent rental payments is approaching the $1.4 billion in aid to victims from floodwaters and is the last time government contracts awarded with little competition.

Several of the contracts were clearly given to politically connected firms in the aftermath of the 2005 storm and were estimated without counting months later. Critics say the management presents waste and outright hurt small companies. Generally, half of the government's contracts valued at $500,000 or greater were sole.

In January, federal investigators will release the first of several audits examining abuse in more than $1.2 billion in disaster contracts. The charges range from political favoritism to shoddy work and no-bid

The WORLD

Edna Leonora B. Bueno

US deaths in Iraq exceed toll count in 9/11 attacks

BAGHDAD, IRAQ—THE US MILITARY DEATH toll in Iraq has reached 2,974, one more than the number of deaths in the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in the United States, according to an Associated Press count on Tuesday.

The US military said two soldiers died Monday in a bomb explosion southwest of Baghdad.

The deaths raised the number of troops killed to 2,974 since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003. The Sept. 11 attacks claimed 2,973 victims in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania.

"The joint patrol was conducting security operations in order to stop terrorism from placing roadside bombs in the area," the military said in a statement on the latest deaths. "As they conducted their mission, a roadside bomb exploded near one of their vehicles."

Another soldier was wounded in the explosion, the military said.

Earlier Monday, the US statistic announced the deaths of two soldiers killed in Anbar. It said one soldier died and two were wounded when a roadside bomb exploded near a US military vehicle in southern Baghdad on Monday.

An American soldier and a Marine died Sunday from combat wounds sustained in Anbar province, the military said.

Prior to the latest deaths, the AP count was 33 higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated Friday at 10 a.m. EST. At least 2,377 died as a result of hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The British military has reported 128 deaths: Army, 53; Ukraine, 18; Poland, 20; Bulgaria, 13; Spain, 11; Denmark, six; El Salvador, five; Slovakia, four; Estonia, Netherlands, Thailand, two each; and Australia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Romania, one death each.

On Monday, British soldiers backed by tanks raided a police station in the southern city of Basra, killing seven gunmen in an effort to stop insurgents from intimidating their prisoners, the British military said.

After the British stormed the Basra police station, they removed the prisoners, who showed evidence of torture, then exchanged fire building before blowing it up.

The operation dressed how closely aligned some police units are with militias and death squads—and the challenges confronting forces bent on their transfer security for security to Iraqis.

In Baghdad, police found 40 bodies, apparent victims of sectarian violence. A car bomb exploded beside a market and a suicide bomber struck a bus in apparent attacks that killed 14 civilians and wounded at least 33.

In the Basra raid, the British set out to arrest officers with the successful coalition crimes unit who were suspected of involvement with illicit death squads. Seven members of the rogue police unit were apprehended, police chief Hamid Hayes Jr. Jerry Saleh.

"We had intelligence to indicate that the serious crimes unit would remain in prisoners in the coming days, so we decided to intervene," Saleh said.

British troops were fired on as they approached the station and their escape line killed seven gunmen, said Maj. Charlie Burbridge, another British military spokesperson.

British and Iraqi forces were forced till 76 prisoners at the station to another facility in downtown Basra, he said. Some prisoners had "classic torture injuries" such as crushed hands and feet, cigarette and electrical burns and gunshot wounds to the knees, Burbridge said.

The British demolished the building in an effort to disband the unit. "We identified the serious crimes unit as, frankly, too far gone," Burbridge said. "We just had to get rid of it."

The unit's members, he alleged, were involved in tribal and political rivals in southern Iraq, which is mostly Shiites. They were not, he said, engaged in the kind of sectarian reprisal killings that have terrorized Sunni neighborhoods of Baghdad.

Most of Britain's 7,200 troops in Iraq are based in the Basra area.

Mohammad al-Waeli, a spokesperson for Iraqi Defense Ministry, said the operation was coordinated with the Iraqi government. "Multinational forces got approval for this raid from this ministry and with participation of the Iraqi military," he said.

US Army Lt. Gen. Martin Dempsey, who is in charge of training Iraqi forces, said in Washington last week that efforts were under way to weed out Iraqi national police believed to be sympathetic to the militias.

Up to a quarter are thought to be aligned with the militias, which are engaged in sectarian violence.

The establishment of a stable Iraqi police force is vital to the US-led coalition's goal of handing security responsibility to Iraqis, so foreign troops can return home. AP

MARINE Corporal Jason Hassell grieves Dec. 19 beside the casket of friend Marine Lance Cpl. Brent E. Bender killed in combat in Iraq. AP/AFP

US probes arrests of 2 Iranians in Iraq

WASHINGTON—THE WHITE House said Monday it will seek for custody of an investigation over two Iranians arrested in weighlooting Iraq before judging whether they confirm Iranian meddling in Iraqi affairs.

US forces in Iraq arrested the pair after releasing two other Iranians who had diplomatic immunity.

The White House declined to reveal the names of the Iranians in the detainees, but cited Iranian "meddling" in Iraqi affairs.

"We suspect this route soldiers out claims about Iranian meddling, but we want to finish our investigation of the detained Iranians before characterizing their activities," White House spokesperson Alex Conant said.

The spokesperson said two of the detainees had been handed over to Iraqi authorities.

The announcements, concerning diplomatic tensions between Iran, the United States and the international community, after the UN Security Council voted on its nuclear program.

The United States accuses Tehran of fueling the violence in Iraq, arming Iran-backed Shiite militias and the Mahdi Army militia of Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr.

US commanders in Iraq regularly accuse Iran of fomenting unrest in its troubled neighbor, but the Shiite-led Baghdad government has praised closer security ties with Tehran. AFP

Arnie to undergo surgery

SAN FRANCISCO—CALIFORNIA Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger revealed on his own website surgery after breaking his leg in an Idaho skiing accident over the weekend, a spokesperson said.

Schwarzenegger, 59, will undergo knee surgery Tuesday morning to repair his fractured right femur, which he broke while skiing with his family in Sun Valley, Idaho, on Saturday, spokesperson Julie Soderlund said Monday.

The procedure will use cables and screws to secure the governor's upper thigh bone, said Dr. Rishi Bhatt, the orthopedic surgeon performing the surgery at an undisclosed hospital in Los Angeles.

The governor, who has already been admitted to the hospital, will be placed under general anesthesia for no longer than two hours, though the surgery is not expected to last that long, Bhatt said.

California Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante will serve as acting governor while Schwarzenegger is under anesthesia, said Andrea Lynn Hoch, the governor's legal affairs secretary. AP

IN SENEGAL, A POWERFUL IMAGE OF 2006

An aerial view shows pools of mineral-colored water gathered on salt flats in Sabo dug by salt collectors on the Senegalese-Gambia near the border with Gambia June 17. Women collect salt by hand into 55kg sacks, which sell for about $2, and are reunited with neighboring Gambia and Mauritania, where salt is mainly used for preserving fish in areas without electricity. REUTERS

Japanese in building scandal gets 5 years

TOKYO—A JAPANESE ARCHITECT at the center of a scandal over unsafe buildings was sentenced to five years in prison on Tuesday for his role in a scandal that left residents of the homes and hotels vulnerable to even moderate earthquakes.

The scandal, in which quake resistance data was falsified for buildings, first broke more than a year ago and outraged the public in the earthquake-prone country.

Hidetsugu Aneha, 49, who has been stripped of his architect license, had already pleaded guilty after hearing data for nearly 100 apartments and hotels that he had designed, in a bid to cut costs cut so that he would win contractors' business.

Aneha had added that his wife was in poor health. She was found dead in March, and media reports quoted police as saying it may have been suicide.

Aneha was also fined 1.5 million yen ($13,000) in the case, in which he was indicted for fabricating data for four condominiums and two hotels, the Tokyo District Court said.

An architectural designer linked to the scandal also given a suspended sentence on Tuesday, the court said.

Two others, a construction company executive and the head of a building inspection firm, have also received suspended sentences for falsifying company financial statements.

The scandal, which experts said led to roots in a drive to cut costs, prompted criticism of the government for lax building inspections.

Many of the hotels have been forced to shut down, although some have reopened after reinforcement work. Reuters

Trial reveals how Serbian fugitive Mladic hid

BELGRADE, SERBIA—AFTER 11 years, the hunt for Radovan Karadzic and Gen. Ratko Mladic may well be the most frustrating, infuriating and frustrating manhunt.

The two, wanted for the most heinous war crimes of Bosnia's bloody civil war from 1992 to 1995, have managed to elude thousands of Western peacekeepers and local police forces with what is widely suspected to be the collusion of the Serbian military. Wealthy and loyal, they have seemingly unlimited resources at their disposal.

Evidence at the trial describes an elaborate odyssey that started out with the general hiding in Belgrade's best-known army barracks with the full knowledge of the army hierarchy, and then shows him being whisked away in a Yugo by bodyguards to a private apartment.

For a period of 3 1/2 years, the secretive Yugoslav army officer—which still regarded as a hero by many Serbs but is vehemently despised by the Bosnian Muslims he victimized—moved among six safehouses. He and some of a number of days and others for months, before finally holing up in a Croatian-era mountain for more than two years. There, prosecutors say, he was provided with a housekeeper, and prescription and phone calls were brought to his door.

Throughout, he seemed to have the protection of the army and state officials. At one point, he was offered plastic surgery and a false passport to help him flee the country, something he appears to have declined. To this day, he still eludes arrest.

Mladic and Karadzic, the political leader of the Bosnian Serbs, were indicted at the end of the Bosnian war by an international war crimes tribunal for the former Yugoslavia for laying siege to Sarajevo and masterminding the massacre in 1995 in Srebrenica of more than 8,000 Muslim men and boys.

The trial of the 11 began in September, after intense international pressure on the Serbian government to arrest it, was trying to find Mladic. New York Times News Service

MAO

Mao: A monster or an authentic Chinese hero?

HONOLULU—WAS MAO Zedong a monster or an authentic Chinese hero? A radical, unfeeling leader or a great revolutionary who liberated China from foreign domination, poverty and disease?

Historians, journalists and many Chinese are still pondering these questions as the 113th anniversary of the birth of Mao, father of communist China.

His successors, presiding over a booming economy, refuse to answer. They let Sept. 9, the 30th anniversary of Mao's death at 82, pass quietly, without fuss or fanfare, and have requested to do the same on his birthday on Thursday.

In early February 1946, Mao insisted on a newly minted Associated Press correspondent, 27-year-old Sid Shapiro, that he had no desire to be a "monster" and that he was not "a man who likes to kill people."

Shapiro, who died in 1999, was in Yan'an, his secluded and heavily guarded outer capital next to the Gobi desert. I was in Yan'an to report on negotiations to bring the warring Nationalist and Communist factions together.

The unconfirmed peasant's son was also living in a simple one-story house, but he occupied not the shoddy, very pooch of the Long March that saved the communist rebellion in the 1930s. A lack of exercise and love of good food—apparent at the dinner as one delicious dish succeeded the other—had turned Mao into a rolly-poly figure whose padded, army blue jacket and trousers made him seem like a Chinese Santa Claus.

His longtime personal physician, Li Zhisui, revealed that in his old age Mao was a self-indulgent, sometimes erotic rogue who seduced young female admirers.

The second book, "Mao: The Unknown Story" by Jung Chang, and her husband, Jon Halliday, claimed, among other things, that Mao wasn't a real revolutionary and a good part of communism in other communist countries lamenting that millions of Chinese peasants would die of hunger as a result. AP

WHAT'S INSIDE

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- Miller is new ace of Aces as Alaska rises /A24

SPORTS

Editor Teddyvic S. Melendres

PSC races to find Olympic heroes

Two or 4 years may not be enough for RP gold bid in Beijing, says Ramirez

By Jane Navarro

IT WILL TAKE ANOTHER generation of athletes before the Philippines could regain its lofty billing in Asia, and much longer to achieve parity with the world's best.

Officials of the Philippine Olympic Committee and the Philippine Sports Commission will be guided by this homework when they sit down soon and begin paving the road to the Olympics.

"We better start now because two or four years may not be enough for us to get that gold in the Olympics," said POC chief Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, the oldest self-confessed sports addict in Philippine history.

Ramirez cited the achievements of China and Australia, two countries which have been waging huge, yet internationally elite installing its elite sports programs.

The chief de mission of team Philippines in the recent Doha Asian Games said the POC plans to duplicate the Chinese and Australian models in talent identification and scientific training.

When he starts plotting the strategies for the 2008 Beijing Olympics with POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, the oldest self-confessed sports addict in Philippine history.

"We're not doing what the Germans, Chinese, Australians and the Americans are doing," said Ramirez. "These countries start from the basic process of identifying the talents and then nurturing them to become world champions."

He explained that athletes should be discovered at an early age and schooled in a sports institution to maximize their potentials.

"That's how they do it," said Ramirez. "Sadly, we don't have that kind of philosophy. It's quite lamentable that even the Philippine Sports Institute is not being supported by the national sports associations."

The Department of Education runs the Philsports Institute, one of the government's grassroots development programs for sports, apart from the Philippines Friendship Games.

"What we lack is a unified sports program, that's why the goal of catching up with the best of the world is a long and arduous task for us," said Ramirez.

"If we begin now, we could get somewhere."

For starters, Ramirez said the country should focus on individual athletes and sports in which Filipinos have a realistic chance of winning medals internationally.

"Other countries have strong traditions in certain sports," he said. "Hong Kong won its first gold in the Olympics through windsurfing—and they're good at that sport, while the Africans are great long-distance runners.

"Ever wondered why Thailand wins most medals in the Doha Asiad than its Southeast Asian neighbors? It's because they target all the gold medals to unpak salmay. Thailand's got spunk."

Ramirez said that aside from accentific training, other countries invest millions of dollars to their Asian athletes.

"We are going to fight someone with big budgets, sports institutes and governments with so much concern for sports," he said.

BEIJING BOUND: From left, boxer Joan Tipon, taekwondo's Maria Assumpta Rivera and boxer Violito Payla

Gomez stuns Chinese GM; So, Paragua lose

PABLO

PARAGUA

Pro league eyes QC, Taguig as site for new PBA dome

TRINIDAD

PBL rides high on innovative cage program

By Jaemies W Reyes

COMMISSIONER CHING TEMIKAD DOES not mind if the PBL has become an extension of her secretary's turn-up collegiate leagues.

It's an innovative setup that works, Temikad says, and the league intends to stick to it.

"The formula we stumbled upon only rediscovered a year-round basketball program," he said.

In recent PBL conferences, most companies have forged partnerships with schools from the UAAP and the NCAA.

GAMES ON AIR: 5—Alaska vs Coca-Cola (Game Seven) 7:15 PM—Red Bull Barko vs Welcoat 8:30 PM—Magnolia vs Air21 9:45 PM—Alaska vs Coca-Cola (Game Seven) 11 PM—Magnolia vs Welcoat Center

In the ongoing Silver Cup, six of the nine teams opted for their school-based rosters.

"The companies see the viability of the program," said Temikad. "It's not mandatory, but reaffirmation is easier."

The reigning collegiate champions inked deals with two giant food and beverage corporations.

NCAA Hihit Sam Bole signed up its key players to a two-year pact with Magnolia of San Miguel Corp., while Ateneo champion University of Santo Tomas partnered with Bottle Giant of RFM.

Hapee Toothpaste signed the core of Philippine Christian University, while Toyota Otis teamed up with Letran.

There are also tie-ups between Global Sizzlers and St. Benilde, and between Harbour Centre and National University.

Temikad pointed out that the program is also logistically advantageous to both the companies and the league.

"It's more practical to deal with the teams," he said. "There's no need to break up the players. There are less hassles, like in fixing the schedule.

"The good thing about college-based teams is there are natural rivalries," Temikad added. "They bring in die-hard, decent fans already to the fans."

And with the departure of amateur powerhouses Welcome Rain and Red Bull to the pros this year, the PBL landscape has changed further.

"More teams mean opportunities for more players to play," Temikad said. "It's a venue for them to discover for themselves if they have a career in basketball or how it's likely to have a career in basketball."

Miller is new ace of Aces as Alaska rises

WILLIE Miller (right) is Coach Eord's reliable trump card.

BEING A FORMER PBA MOST VALUABLE player, Willie Miller is not supposed to go unnoticed when roaming.

He does precisely what the 5-foot-11 guard has been doing, flying under the radar and in the process sinking Alaska's drive to go further in the Talk 'N Text PBA Philippine Cup.

In the just-ended series, the league's best in 2002 crashed quite unnoticed, leading the team to two wins going into the solid-card phase.

"He was picking up some big numbers and I was wondering if anyone would take notice," said Alaska coach Tim Cone of Miller.

Members of the PBA Press Corps didn't miss Miller's caliber and turned him no second Talk 'N Text Player of the Week for the period Dec. 16-Dec. 23.

It was the second such citation bestowed on Miller, who also earned the honor for the period Nov. 20-26. He joined two-time winners Mark Caguioa and Rudy Hatfield of Barangay Ginebra and Sunday Salvador and Ali Mirjam of Brgy.

Cone believes that Miller, who was moved to the starting point guard role, deserves the medal.

"He's playing as well—or better than—his MVP year," said Cone.

In the 36-93 win over Welcoat last Dec. 20, Miller had 29 points, nine rebounds, five assists, two blocks and a steal.

The Olongapo native followed that up with a near-triple double of 20 points, 10 assists and eight rebounds as the Aces wound up the qualifying-round with their third straight win, a hard-earned 96-91 overtime decision over Purefoods Chunkee.

With that winning skein, the Aces wound up with eight wins against 10 losses—the record they will be carrying over to the solid-card round starting in January.

The solid card is a single round-robin format among the sixth- to ninth-placed teams to determine the fourth and final semifinalist.

Alaska's carryover record puts it at seventh, two games behind either Purefoods or the Air21 Realty, who wound up with 10-8 slates and will be playing off on Jan. 3 to determine who will be relegated to the wild card.

As things stand, the Aces' hopes are pinned mostly on emerging the wild card and winning the playoff game against the team that emerges with a losing record.

Cone knows exactly what Miller's role will be for the squad in the next phase.

"The important thing for us right now is getting through the wild card," said Cone. "Willie will play a big part in that."

MILO JUNIOR CUP

Malaysian siblings rout rivals, gain 2nd round

MALAYSIAN BROTHERS AUGUSTINE AND Oscar Chong whitewashed opposite local bogey pestilences in the third phase of the 2006 Milo Junior Tennis Cup at the Philam Homes Tennis Club in Quezon City.

Augustine routed Axel Arienza, 6-0, 6-0, in the 10-under division while Oscar whipped Kevin Manansal by the same score in 14-under play at the Malaysians opened their bid with a bang in the year-ender age-group tournament.

Division favorites Jose Lorenzo Perez and Kyle Cordero also advanced in the boys' 14-under bracket after turning similar 6-0, 6-0 romps over Patrick Paez and Ali Amoda, respectively.

Joining Augustine Chong in the next round of the 10-under class at the PHILTennis Center are Jose Lorenzo Cruz, Margaret Flores, Dominic de los Reyes and Jacob Echague.

Cruz overwhelmed Calista Tordesillas, 6-1, 6-0, Flores roasted Jade Cagasbasa, 6-2, 6-2, De los Reyes outplayed Sydney Mei Mella, 6-0, 6-4, and Echague bested Ifiah Arevalo, 6-2, 6-1.

Other first-day winners in the tournament organized by the CTM, supported by Prince equipment and sanctioned by the Philta were Isaiah Sanchez, Gilgert Fuentebue and Mark Santiago.

Manny Pacquiao trader of the year?

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

DEPTS: They would rather remain anonymous. But there's no harm mentioning the names of stuffed bears who have again made today's gift-giving for children of prison and penitentiary workers in Barangay Pinyahan, Lipa City, crossfire: Wendy Chavez, Dr. Raul Reyes, Alonzo Rivera, Louie Ilio, Dirty Mayor, Marcelino Maralit, Sunny Silva, Jaebing Mickelsson, Robert Jaworski and Jhun Afuma. Thank you, agents, fellows.)

* * *

THE PHILIPPINE SPORTSWRITERS ASSOCIATION is having a hard time picking the single-greatest performer who will be declared Athlete of the Year.

No, not because we are lacking in deserving candidates.

In fact, one problem facing the 39th, founded in 1946, involves boxing superstar Manny Pacquiao.

Pacquiao, named by Sports Network and unanimously seven times of the Year, apparently is not qualified for PSA's grand award.

* * *

You see, the PSA had actually picked Pacquiao Athlete of the Year at least a couple of times in the past.

But left with a slew of world-class winners and at least four dozen Games gold medalists, the PSA appears in a bind.

Reserving Pacquiao, he wouldn't be glad enough being lumped together with big Filipino victors like Elma "Baby" Reyes and Ronnie Alonzo of billiards, Jean Ryan and Mobile Paula of aeromove bowling.

However, there were ready suggestions that Pacquiao, with his impact on world sports, could instead be given a bigger award, like Filipino Athlete of the Decade, while the others could be grouped together.

Maybe Pacquiao-Solaiman also has ties, the president's no longer new anything wrong with a man-not becoming his word.

He has become so big and great he must've thought he was free to form and evolve his own set of values.

Now it divorced two-fisted battles, Pacquiao saw nothing wrong with signing contracts left and right, as long as the price is right.

Sorry, folks, but in so doing, Pacquiao has also succeeded in projecting (to the world) the Filipino as a sleeping, smashing closet who should be kept a great distance from our all-grown-up children.

It's, indeed, not very flattering, this picture of a greedy, mindless slugger—surveyors in sonic boy flags—taking over the leather business when Filipinos have learned to adore for his excellency.

Just ten Manny cleaned promotions for predictably dangling big money—a 91-million paycheck—to win back Pacquiao ruin honor-ing a veteran contemporary?

NEW year will find successors to the Reunion siblings, RP's most recognizable players.

Lakeshore topped Level A in the Batangas leg.

Michael Pedilar and Shiela Siodoja were one siblings Aylvester and Bellaire Cortez in the mixed doubles. In the 35-under event, Mrs Pinedo paired with Helen Campo and then with Mervyn Santiago for the gold doubles title and the mixed doubles plum, respectively.

SPORTSWATCH

Hundreds vying in charity darts tourney

THE "LIKE SURVIVOR DON'T QUIT" CHARITY DARTS TOURNAMENT showcased more than 200 participants in the Open, Ladies, Novice and Pinoy Boys divisions at the Pinoy Game Parlor, 3rd Floor, Robinsons Place Ermita.

Proceeds of the tournament will be donated to several charitable institutions. Registration starts at 7 a.m.

80 fighters in Makati 'Salpukan' today

THE SIXTH MILO JUST GIMMAYSON POUND OF THE '06 PSAMILO0N '06-marketing Salpukan" 10-week derby kicks off at 6 p.m. today at the Makati Coliseum with 192 amateur-ranking juniors. Participants scoring three wins will share in the P100,000 top prize, according to promoters Lito Gatbonton, Rudy Salud and Mithrun Goel of PBC Sports and Entertainment Corp. The derby, sponsored by Milo Energy Drink, Jose and Sons Marketing, will feature 80 fights. On Jan. 20 another twenty three-round amateur action will be staged. The grand championship unfolds this Saturday, Feb. 10 at the Araneta Coliseum.

Las Piñas derby stakes P500,000

A PRIZE PACK OF P500,000 AWAITS THE WINNING JOCKEY AT THE "FIRST Cock Derby" at the Las Piñas Cockpit Arena. The derby—the deadliest, to be hosted by Mayor Vilma Aguilar, ends the cockfighting season. At least 30 cocksure cockers and breeders are taking part. Aside from the cash prizes, last cock-eye wins will go to the winners. Derby fee is P1,000. Entries must be submitted on derby day. Call 805-1040, 874-2000 or 0919-7430275. Last Saturday, the 28-derby winner of Tanchi-Bacolod Poultry Corporation's Commercial-1 cock derby hosted by cockmaster-manager Alex Tabilas and RC Espinosa.

Iloy's matriarch passes away

LEGACY IS THICK BLOOD, MOTHER OF BASKETBALL'S SPORTS CLAN, Alfonso Iloy, died yesterday at the family residence in Tolong Ilog, Bataan, Philstar.com reports. She was 91. Survived by husband Alfonso Sr., children Manuel and daughter Chuchie Iloy-Moreno, 16 grandchildren and 26 Mini-an Olympian Park on Dec. 28 after a Mass at the San Gabriel Parish Church.

Taguig track opens Friday; Namssa fetes top riders

A FOUR-HECTARE, FENCED OFF-road race track will be built soon in Upper Bicutan, Taguig City, according to its developers.

To be called the Paul Teach Motorsports Park, the track's construction has received the support of Taguig Mayor Freddie Tiñga.

The motorsports park will be launched this January in a ceremony to be held at the Bicutan Gymnasium.

Tiñga and Rep. Jack Enrile will later present the awards to the national bike champions.

The Bicutan complex (left) is one of the four Metro Manila motocross and fun-cross tracks that will be built soon.

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The Bicutan complex (left) is one of the four Metro Manila motocross and fun-cross tracks that will be built soon.

Nationwide quest for fresh b'minton hotshots launched

By Marc Anthony Reyes

IT'S TIME TO DO SOME HOUSE-CLEANING on local badminton.

To get rid of recycled players, a comprehensive, multi-leg tour will be launched all over the country to scour the countryside for fresh badminton talents.

Dubbed the nationwide thrust of the Philippine Badminton Association next year as national coach Eyad Chan faced the mechanics of the eight-leg Rasta-Starite-regional championships.

Chan said slots in the national development pool are at stake in the tournament.

The series was opened by the Philippines' medal drought in the 2005 Southeast Asian Games and the recent Doha Asian Games despite the long-popularity of the sport in the country.

Chan, who also handles the PBA's development program, said current tournaments give premium on the corporate level and neglects the grassroots level.

"That's what we're aiming for when we conceptualized the idea of putting up a regional badminton tournament: give premium on sports development in the grassroots level," said Francis Saba, tour co-chair and regional coordinator.

The tournament actually kicked off with the Pampanga leg last Dec. 3-3.

It will be followed by the Cebu edition on Jan. 20-22 at the Waterfront Badminton Center.

Collegiate players Patrick Chan and Roxanne Barcoma and Olympian Weena Kosasih are the tour's ambassadors.

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Wade outplays Bryant as Heat trample Lakers

MIAMI'S Dwyane Wade (3) drives to the basket against Lakers' Kobe Bryant (right) as Heat teammate Antoine Mourning looks on.

MIAMI—DWYANE WADE SCORED A season-high 46 points and passed out 11 assists in a spectacular one-man Christmas performance to lead the Miami Heat past the Los Angeles Lakers, 101-85, here Monday.

Wade hit 12-of-20 shots and contributed four steals, four blocked shots and four rebounds while playing spirited defense against Lakers star Kobe Bryant in sparking the defending National Basketball Association champions to victory.

"This was a great game," Wade said.

"It's a great opportunity on Christmas Day. We wanted to...go out there and take charge from the start and that's exactly what we did."

The Lakers, led by 14 points from Bryant and 13 from Forward-Center Kwame Brown, fell behind by 11 points in the first half and could never overcome the blast. Bryant hit only 6-of-17 from the field.

The Lakers (twelfth fourth in NBA scoring with 20.1 points a game while Bryant ranks ninth with 27.8 points a game). Bryant was frustrated with Wade's one-man show.

"He is a ball of a young player," Bryant said. "He's really matched for coming off those screen-and-rolls and attacking. He's a phenomenal, phenomenal player."

The Heat improved to 13-14, matching Milwaukee for eighth in the Eastern Conference with their third straight win over the two-a-day with a win over the Atlanta Hawks in their regular season finale.

The Cowboys (9-6) had already secured a playoff berth but to win the division they must now beat the Detroit Lions and hope the Eagles fall to the Falcons.

Witten off as playoff-no-hopers after a season-ending injury to Pro Bowl quarterback Donovan McNabb, the Eagles have soared to unexpected highs behind backup Jeff Garcia who directed Philadelphia to their fourth straight win. Reuters

Eagles give fans perfect holiday gift

DALLAS—THE PHILADELPHIA EAGLES gave their fans the perfect Christmas present on Monday, clinching a playoff spot with a 21-7 win over the Dallas Cowboys.

The New York Jets were also in festive mood after Mike Nugent's field goal with 18 seconds left gave them a 12-10 win over the Miami Dolphins, keeping their post-season hopes alive.

New York (9-6) can clinch an AFC wild card spot if they beat Oakland (2-13) in their finishing regular season game.

The Eagles improved to 9-6 with their win, securing at least an NFC wild card spot. They also have the chance to claim the NFC East title for the fifth time in six years with a win over the Atlanta Falcons in their regular season finale.

The Cowboys (9-6) had already secured a playoff berth but to win the division they must now beat the Detroit Lions and hope the Eagles fall to the Falcons.

Witten off as playoff-no-hopers after a season-ending injury to Pro Bowl quarterback Donovan McNabb, the Eagles have soared to unexpected highs behind backup Jeff Garcia who directed Philadelphia to their fourth straight win. Reuters

Nadal targets better season

NADAL

MADRID—RAFAEL Nadal is determined to kick-off 2007 at full throttle and make up for the latter disappointment of his injury-ravaged season 2006.

A crippling foot injury ruled the Spaniard out of the first six weeks of this year, an absence which also included the opening Grand Slam event in Australia.

But in 2007, the French Open champion is vowing no time to lose in build-up to Melbourne where the Australian Open begins on January 15.

Nadal will begin his season on January 1 at the Chennai Open and then travel to Sydney for the Medibank International. At both events he will be top seed.

"I have a big motivation because when I came back to Australia it's one of my favorite tournaments and the weather is perfect for me," Nadal said in a teleconference to promote the Sydney event.

"Melbourne is one of my favorite cities in the world, a special city for me...and as well it is a big motivation. It's one of my special goals for 2007 to come well in Australia."

The 20-year-old ended the 2006 season amid a title drought. Nadal won 11 titles during 2005 and in 2006 he added five more from his first eight tournaments, including a second straight Roland Garros crown. AFP

Athlete of the Year award surprises Tiger

TIGER WOODS: Praises rivals deserving of the award.

JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA—TIGER Woods had an answer for everything.

When he missed the cut in the U. Open, for the first time in a major—his first tournament after his father died of cancer—many questioned whether he could rekindle his desire to dominate. He never finished worse than second in stroke play the rest of the season.

Phil Mickelson emerged anew as a serious threat to Woods' domain by winning his second straight major at the Masters and nearly making it three in a row at the US Open. Woods responded by winning the next two majors without breaking a sweat.

And there remained skepticism about his latest swing change, put to rest by a year that ranked among Woods' best ever on the PGA Tour. He won eight times in 15 starts, six in a row to close out his season, two more majors to reach 12 for his career.

Also the only thing he couldn't answer was how he was voted AP Male athlete of the Year.

Sports editors

Woods awards the award in swinging US sports editors over two Dirgo Chargers

wearing back LaCrosse Tomlinson, with Swiss tennis great Roger Federer a distant third. The 31 year-old Woods won for the fourth time in his career, tying the record set by Lance Armstrong, who won the last four years.

While pleased to have tied Armstrong's record, Woods was perplexed it did not get the good Lionel Federer, who could be seen in television tennis. Woods was in Federer's box at Flushing Meadows when the Swiss star captured the US Open.

"What he's done is amazing. I think, is far greater than what I've done in golf," Woods said. "He's tied what... five majors in three years? That's pretty good."

Federer actually has lost a few more than that, but not many. His record in 2006 was an amazing 92-5, including 12 straight titles.

Woods received 28 percent from sports editors around the country. Tomlinson, who already has one an NFL record of 31 touchdowns with one regular season game left, was second with 2.90 points. Federer, who won three Grand Slam titles and lost in the final at the French Open, had 13.0 points.

Rounding out the top of the list were Miami Heat guard Dwyane Wade (48 points) and St. Louis Cardinals slugger Albert Pujols and NL home run champion (pts) I homed all the Philadelphia Phillies (29 points each).

First player

Woods again made it look routine, winning at least eight PGA Tour events for the third time in his career and becoming the first player in history to capture multiple majors in consecutive seasons.

"Any time you're over 50 percent winning in one sports, it's probably a good year," Woods said. "I know how hard it is. I know what it takes to get to that point. I hate to say it, but people in the media and fans don't understand how hard it is. Players do. The things players have said is one over the years, that means alot."

What made this year different from others was the magnitude of his loss.

After winning his first two tournaments of the year, the Buick Invitational and the Bobal Desert Classic over the Easter Texas Woods' program relieved at his father's health deteriorated. Earl Woods, the father, an retired and driving force behind his success as a person and a player, died May 3. AP

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

TV GUIDE

Wednesday, December 27, 2006

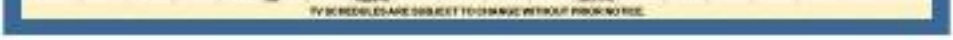
THE BIGGEST DANCE EVENT THIS SEASON!

SHALL WE DANCE

Christmas

with Dre

Christmas Ibe!



TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

SUN CELLULAR PREPAID

SUN Triple 3 Treats

Prize Overload

Lots of prizes for each member up for grabs weekly.
Pwede pang manalo ng ₱1 million pesos each, TAX FREE!

Bumuo lang ng group of 3. The more you load, mas maraming discounts at mas marami ding chances of winning!

Form a group of 3 and register within 15 days. Only 1 person out of 3 needs to register. The other 2 simply have to join. Ang saka join sa ang 2nd member, officially-registered na ang group! May 10% discount na kayo sa Unlimited Services and Text Calls. At mag-raffle entries pang maiipon habang nag-load. When the group reaches a total load top up of ₱1100 within 30 days, each member gets 20% discount on all Unlimited Services and Text Calls purchases the following month.

How to start a group:

Text "REG<space>first name<space>last name<space>address" and send to 333.
Ex. "REG Mark<space>Ramos<space>2996 Main Guthrie<space>Quezon City" then send to 333

Sun will reply and assign a group name na pwedeng ipasabi sa mga friends na gustong mag-join.

See previous and future the details na pwedeng discounted load.

How to join a group:

Text: "JOIN<space>group name<space>first name<space>last name<space>address" and send to 333.
Ex. "JOIN mark0977123456 1Boracay Sta Cat 8747 Pasay city Rizal" then send to 333

Group members must use the assigned name na pinadala ng Sun Cellular sa 1st group member.

How to join the RAFFLE:

Simply load any of the following Sun Cellular prepaid product's para makakuha ng electronic raffle entries:

1. Physical regular load
2. Physical unlimited call texts
3. Physical special cards
4. Dealer vouchers
5. Xpress Load regular reload
6. Xpress Load unlimited reload
7. Budding Station reload
8. EBB self-reload

Raffle entry accumulation table:

ACTIVITY	NUMBER OF RAFFLE ENTRIES EARNED
Every ₱15.00 purchase	1
When group reach ₱1100 within 30 days	10
1 unlimited call text group load ₱1 Unlimited 30 days	30
2 unlimited call text group load ₱1 Unlimited 30 days	30

For more info, call the Sun Hotline 293-8000 or visit www.sunmobile.com.ph
See previous and future for more details. Promo period: Oct. 22, 2006-Jan 28, 2007.

Prizes:

WEEKLY PRIZES	QTY	# OF WINNERS PER WEEK	DRAW DATE
Nokia N73 Music Edition	40	20	Weekly
21.5" LCD TV	2	40	Weekly
21.5" Sony Ericsson W580	2	20	Weekly

MAJOR PRIZES	QTY	# OF WINNERS PER WEEK	DRAW DATE
iPod Nano 4G	9	1	Nov 14
Philips DVD Player DVP 3142	9	1	Nov 21
iPod Nano 4G	9	1	Nov 28
Canon PowerShot A 630 Digital Camera	9	1	Dec 5
Sony Ericsson K790i Cellphone	6	1	Dec 12
Sony Ericsson W910i Cellphone	6	1	Dec 19
Pioneer Avic F1 Generation Video DVD	6	1	Dec 26
BMX Roadrunner 420 XT	6	1	Jan 2
samsung LED 32" with remote 4V	3	1	Jan 9
samsung LED 40" w/Home Theater System	3	1	Jan 16
Mitsubishi L 200	3	1	Jan 23
1st Mahindra	3	1	Jan 29

Prizes shown may vary from actual unit.

IN THIS ISSUE
■ DAR offers land for tie-ups with firms /B3
■ Inflation seen slowing down further in 2007 /B7

BUSINESS
Editor Raul G. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mariano

Zest-O in talks to buy Dubai-based firm

Overseas expansion will also include China, Indonesia

By Doris C. Dumlao

LOCAL BEVERAGE MANUFACTURER ZEST-O CORP. IS IN TALKS to buy out Dubai-based Arab Beverages Establishments (ABE), the world's biggest producer of fruit juices in doypack pouches similar to the packaging of the Zest-O brand.

Zest-O chair Alfredo Yao said his company was in exclusive negotiations for the purchase of ABE and that he was set to leave for Dubai after Christmas to wrap up discussions on the acquisition.

ABE produces the Capri-Sonne fruit juice under license from Capri-Sun AG (Switzerland).

"Their contract will expire next year so they're looking for another group to continue the operations," Yao said, noting that his company had already conducted a due diligence audit on the Dubai company.

The acquisition is part of Zest-O's bid to go global, Yao said. The Philippine company is likewise expanding in the fast-growing Asian region, particularly in China, Indonesia and Vietnam.

ARTICLE CONTINUES ON PAGE B4

INQUIRER MONITOR

Many Metro Manilans have DVD players than Internet access

CURRENCIES

STOCK MARKET

Stocks seem to rise

Gov't borrowings in first 11 months hit ₱592B

By Michelle V. Remo

WITH A DECLINING BUDGET DEFICIT, the national government's borrowings from January to November dropped slightly from a year ago.

Documents from the Department of Finance showed that the government borrowed ₱592.393 billion in the first 11 months of the year, or 0.43 percent lower than the ₱595.21 billion in the same period last year.

Borrowings by the national government are used to cover expenditure requirements that could not be financed by its revenue collection and to pay off maturing obligations.

Of the ₱592.393 billion in borrowings for the 11 months, ₱493.8 billion were used to pay foreign and local liabilities, with the balance for the government's operations.

The amounts spent for paying maturing obligations was 27 percent higher than the ₱388.06 billion recorded in January to November last year. The increase was consistent with the government's aim of accelerating its debt reduction program.

Of the total borrowings in the 11-month period, foreign obligations accounted for ₱244.82 billion and domestic borrowings accounted for the bigger share of ₱347.57 billion.

Foreign borrowings are done either through the floatation of sovereign bonds in the international capital market or sourcing official development assistance (ODA) loans from multilateral and bilateral agencies.

STORY ON B4

RLC eyes large tracts of gov't land for acquisition, development

10-hectare BCDA property in Fort Boni eyed

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

PROPERTY FIRM ROBINSONS LAND CORP. is interested in acquiring large tracts of land being disposed of by the government or by other private companies in line with its efforts to develop more mixed-use communities, RLC president Pedro O. Uy said.

For one, Uy said RLC was interested in the more than 10-hectare property of the Bases Conversion Development Authority in the northern part of Fort Bonifacio in Taguig.

He said the government had yet to announce the bidding schedule for this property and RLC believed it might take six months before the property would be offered for sale.

"We are very interested in any large tracts of land that we can buy or develop under possible joint ventures with the land owners," he said.

To finance its acquisitions, Uy said RLC would use a combination of debt and equity.

RLC is the country's largest business process outsourcing (BPO) lessor with 118,000 square meters of leasable BPO space. It plans on another another 90,000 square meters of leasable space in the next 18 months. It is also the second largest mall developer and one of the leading residential builders in the country.

RLC earlier said it was setting aside as much as P8.5 billion for projects that would be implemented next year to take advantage of the booming office space and residential market.

These projects include a third tower for Cyberpark Center in Mandaluyong, which will offer spaces to BPO companies; Cyberpark Towers 1, which will have about 45,000 square meters of leasable space, will have 27 floors. It is targeted for completion by the first quarter of 2008.

RLC is also embarking on the construction of another office building in Quezon City. RLC's budget will also be earmarked for ongoing projects such as the 50-story Fifth Avenue Place residential condominium in Fort Bonifacio, the 30-story Gateway Garden Ridge in Mandaluyong, One, Two and Three Salcedon Place in Salcedo, Makati, McKinley Park Residences in Fort Bonifacio, its townhouse project 38 & 888 Residences in Pasig, Manila, and its Brookville Estate Mansions in Parañaque.

EXPECTED US economic downturn seen to dampen growth of electronics exports

Philexport expects slower export growth next year

By Rozzel M. Dizon

EXPORT EARNINGS FOR THIS YEAR ARE EXpected to exceed the growth forecast of 10 percent, but the continued strengthening of the peso and the expected softening of markets worldwide could mean slower growth in 2007, according to the Philippine Exporters Confederation.

Specifically, the projected cooling of the United States economy next year is seen to dampen the growth of electronics exports, which remain the country's top dollar earner.

Philexport said data from the Semiconductor and Electronics Industry of the Philippines had shown electronics exports growth forecast of only 5 percent to 10 percent for 2007.

Electronics and semiconductors made up close to 75 percent of the country's total export earnings of $39.33 billion from January to October 2006.

By year-end, the total is seen to reach between $47 billion and $48 billion, which translates to an overall export growth of between 13 percent and 15 percent.

Philexport president Sergio R. Ortiz-Luis Jr. said that with the electronics industry forecasting a high-end growth target of only 10 percent, other export sectors might not be able to pull the growth rate further up.

Ortiz-Luis explained that the strengthening peso had hit indigenous exports the hardest, managing to store their 2006 targets only very slim margins.

He was referring to goods made mainly of domestic raw materials such as processed and fresh food, handicrafts, furniture, holiday decors and housewares.

The Philexport chief said government businesses in key industries that hope to be dynamic growth engines in export also have to be retooled.

"If we want to export more jobs, the businesses growth target next year," Ortiz-Luis explained. "But at the rate the peso keeps on strengthening, I doubt if the indigenous exporters can meet their targets this time."

"Besides, it is hard to project the behavior of the (Arroyo) brands of our main trading partners, particularly the United States," he said.

Floundering deal weighs heavily on Surigao

By Dante L. Lucas

(Second of two parts)

SURIGAO DEL SUR, Philippines — The Governor of Surigao del Sur in southeastern Mindanao, within the 250,000-hectare Surigao Mineral Reservation Area, one of the richest mining zones in the country.

This time is not lost on the impoverished inhabitants of the town and the local government authorities.

"Surigao is still dependent on IRA (internal revenue allotment) from the national government at 70:30," said Surigao City Mayor Alfonso S. Cabarles in an interview. "The mining project is very important to us."

He said the city and the province continued to rely heavily on what were practically donations from the central government in Manila because of their relatively small revenue base.

But such was not always the case. The mayor remembers a time when business in the city and the adjoining areas bustled with life because of all the added mining activity on Dinagat Island.

Need for new industry

Nowadays, business activity in Surigao, especially trading, is at most at a standstill. The entire province has been trying to regain its footing but with limited success, as a tourist destination.

"We really need [the revival of mining operations in] Tubay Iberian that will reduce our dependent on IRA to 50:50," he explained.

CABLARA

SPECIAL REPORT

It is difficult not to be excited about the benefits that the project will bring to the area. In terms of jobs generated, the argument is compelling.

Surigao del Sur's Governor Johnny Pimentel Jr. Barbers Lyndon Barbers said mineral exploration of mining and refinery activities would create at least 5,000 jobs in the impoverished island.

"Even at the minimum wage, that will create P15 million in salaries every month," he said, adding that the amount is no laughing matter in an underdeveloped province like his.

However, ongoing negotiations between Chinese investors, the Philippine government and Philippine Industrial Corp. have all but failed, with talks on how much each party will get at the end of the day reaching an impasse. Last week, Jacksan Henderson Metals Corp. offered the government a 11-percent stake in the nonlisted company plus a $35-million upfront payment in exchange for its $300-million share over Philsaco.

Philsaco, for its part, is reportedly being offered a similar minority stake in the firm, the size of which is probably the issue of contention between parties.

Failed talks

"Their offer is unreasonable," Philsaco president Ramon Narvasa Jr. said in a press conference last week. He said his group wanted Jacksan to lay their cards on the negotiating table.

"We want to get it straight from them if they're serious or not," he said.

The Philsaco chief declined to reveal details of the negotiations, but said the disagreement centered on how much royalties Chen's operations will be structured.

He said some proposals called for the bulk of the profits from the mining operations to be booked in China, leaving the Don's Philippine operations largely as a profit center. Such a structure, he explained, would watch the Chinese partners while leaving only crumbs for the Filipino partners.

Understandably, the government-to-government deal has got to it hot. Soon the subject of no less than three letters of intent and memorandums between President Macapagal-Arroyo and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao.

Last week, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri told reporters that negotiations had hit a wall because Philsaco was demanding a bigger share of the pie—something Narvasa denies.

"The issue is not valuation," he said. "We just want to protect the interests of all the stakeholders involved."

Unless either of the parties budges, however, it is possible that the deal will fall through, given that Chinese investors have signaled their intent to beef up their bargaining position by conducting yet another feasibility study on the project.

The waiting continues

For the people of Hunco, the delays and the false hopes for the revival of the mining industry have become par for the course over the last 20 years.

Philsaco temporarily ceased operations in 1982 after Chandler L. Daniels—who had left for the Middle East three years before to work in the oil industry—is willing to bet his future on the reopening of the mines, notwithstanding the frustrations of waiting for developments beyond his control.

"I have waited for 22 years," he said, "I am willing to wait for 20 more."

At the rate the negotiations are deteriorating, his resolve may soon be put to the test. But the ongoing boom of the global mining industry—and the potential profits to be reaped from it—still are vast as long.

Continued on B3

Zest-O in talks to buy Dubai-based firm

He said Zest-O would spend "a few billions" for its globalization program. It would not be the firm's first overseas acquisition, having earlier purchased another beverage company in China.

"Pak, this globalization going on, the world is now without borders. You have to go out now, unlike before when there were too many barriers," Yao said.

ABIE was founded in 1984. Aside from producing Cagiva scenes, it distributes Acura Oil, "Y" Energy Drink and Bioplus Honey in the limited to-lift business market.

Zest-O is the world's second biggest producer of natural fruit juice concentrate in drippable metal to Cape's Home, with flavors in orange, strawberry, pineapple, grapefruit, mango, mango-orange, apple-grape, mango-calamansi, mango-lemonlime and calamansi. The company also produces the bottled nectar in broad One.

In Dubai, ABE has the opportunity to produce at least 26,000 packets an hour.

The Yaos saw the opportunity to gain a formidable foothold in the Arab market by making this acquisition in Dubai. The partnership privilege will be good using imported concentrate from Brazil.

Zest-O is also making inroads into the Indonesian market.

"We're putting up a plant there but in the meantime, we're exporting from here based on the needs of the Indonesian market," he said.

He said there was a trend among the younger market to shift to healthier beverages like juice and said they are not enough cream a door in the carbonated drink business.

"Within the industry, for the new entrants, the annual value of sales may not likely to be more than P5 billion. Actually it created a new market, and partially grabbed up some share from the carbonated drinks," he said.

Zest-O is expected to post a double-digit growth in business volume this year, he said.

Yao said at least three big companies had offered to buy out Zest-O. "But we don't believe we don't have plans to sell out."

DAR to offer 1.8M ha for tie-ups with private firms

Seeks to boost incomes of agrarian reform communities

By Christine A. Saylican

THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRARIAN REFORM will consolidate some 1.8 million hectares of agrarian reform lands for possible contracts growing arrangements and agribusiness ventures.

Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman said that agrarian reform beneficiaries in Davao Area were ready with projects for agribusiness development and possible tie-ups with privately owned companies engaged in food processing.

"We are already coordinating this project with the Department of Agriculture as they have direct access to private companies and when exactly do they need in terms of raw materials," Pangandaman said in a recent presentation to members of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI).

He said there were 21,949 agrarian reform communities (ARCs) engaged in the production of high value crops such as sugar and coconut and staple crops rice and corn in different provinces nationwide.

"There are investment opportunities and possible tie-ups with agribusiness firms are organized as these ARCs need the market for their products to provide a steady source of income for the farmers, Pangandaman pointed out.

"Companies engaged in the production of coffee, rubber, bananas and others could tap our ARCs in Northern Luzon (to sell to) in the Visayas and Mindanao," he added.

According to Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap, Japanese company Sumitomo Fruits Inc. recently signed up an agreement to can diced 2, 3000 hectares for the production of pineapples in Davao.

ARCs are much like cooperatives in that agrarian reform beneficiaries are brought together to maximize their resources, including the management of agricultural operations and undertaking entrepreneurial activities.

The DAR's role is to provide support services that would help increase productivity and income. These services may include putting up infrastructure such as irrigation facilities, farm-to-market roads and bridges, post- and post-harvest facilities, as well as extending credit and marketing assistance.

Economic and farmers economic planning chief Carlos E. Hidalgo recently handed the program ARCs have made in enrolling poor populations for assistance.

"Based on the findings of the impact studies on CARP (agrarian reform) beneficiaries are now earning better compared to a few farmers," Hidalgo noted. Specifically, labor productivity among ARCs now averages P20,480 per hectare against P8,832 in regular farmlands.

Moreover, average income of agrarian reform beneficiaries have grown to P97,044 a year from P75,747 for non-CARP beneficiaries.

Also, a number of agrarian reform beneficiaries have become the country's own breed of entrepreneurs.

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Help desk eyed to assist agri exporters

AN INTER-AGENCY AGRI-TRADE DESK will be put up early next year to assist Philippine agribusiness companies to lure better and wider access to local and international markets, Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap said.

He said the trade-and-investment information help desk would be set up in coordination with the departments of trade and industry and of foreign affairs.

"It would be one-stop center that will provide assistance to Philippine-based firms so that they would know how to tap local (markets) as well as how they can gear for exports", Yap said in a recent forum with officers and employees of Bale sa mga Pilipino.

Yap said that this would be one of the concrete measures to be taken by government agencies to enhance market linkages for companies here and abroad.

"We want to strengthen (private sector participation) in order to generate more direct investments in agribusiness," he added.

Yap added that this would complement efforts to help exporters, who are now reeling from the effects of a strengthening peso.

One such measure is to exempt exporters having certain particular trips and missions abroad from paying the travel tax.

Export Development Council (EDC) Executive Director Fernando Miguel said that the agency has finalized its travel exemption proposal, which would become the basis for an executive order to be issued by the President.

"The exemption will be limited to official delegations and missions," Miguel said. While he admitted that the measure was timid, the plan was nevertheless a symbolic gesture that the government wanted to help exporters.

Last August, Malacañang issued EO 136 directing all departments, bureaus, commissions, agencies as well as government-owned and -controlled corporations to eliminate the fees imposed on export-related permits and clearances, except those imposed by specific laws.

—Christine A. Saylican

Gov't ...

From page B1

The country's biggest sources of ODAs, which are concessional in nature and carry lower interest rates, include the Japan Bank for International Cooperation, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

Domestic borrowings are undertaken through the issuance of treasury bills, bonds and other government securities.

In line with its intention to minimize exposure to currency volatility, the government has adopted the policy of borrowing more from domestic sources.

The drop in borrowings came with the reduction in the government's budget deficit to only 95.0.2 billion in January to November this year from P122 billion a year ago.

The 12-month deficit was only 47 percent of the P126-billion ceiling set by fiscal authorities for 2006.

The DOF said it expected the deficit for the year to be much lower than the ceiling. Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said the full-year deficit would be between P80 billion and P90 billion.

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Drive Inspired

MOTORING

Editor Cesar D. Manganaan

THE STYLISH and high-performance Toyota Blade will surely excite the local market once Toyota Motor Philippines brings it to the showrooms here.

A trump card up Toyota's sleeve

By Charles E. Bukon

JUST WHEN WE THOUGHT Toyota Motor Corp. would relax a bit (after all the world's second largest automaker introduced a formidable lineup of new vehicle models this year) comes another hit potential.

The company announced last week the launch of its high-end, compact hatchback called Blade.

Powered by a 2.4-liter engine and mated to a continuously variable transmission with seven programmed "speeds" (if the driver chooses a manual transmission like driving), the Blade was conceived by Toyota not only for easy driving (so) one-to-meet the expectations of manner car buyers who are looking for exciting, more premium products.

Toyota described the Blade as an easy-to-handle (using components of its Corolla) compact car that offers the driving performance of a luxury sedan.

Available in Japan

Although the Blade is only available in Japan at the moment (a well-equipped, front-wheel-drive version of the car will sell for 2.772 million yen or roughly P1.31 million here), local car lovers are already excited about the prospect of Toyota Motor Philippines bringing the Blade here.

Jeremy Lincoln, president of Wheel Gallery (which sells exotic magwheels and tires) and who also heads a group of automotive aftermarket suppliers, believes the Blade's sharp styling and aggressive front end would appeal to a lot of young Filipino car buyers who love to dress up or accessorize.

Lincoln added that the Blade would also appeal to car owners who would want to create a high-performance package (for show or racing).

Indeed, the Blade features a sloping nose and trapezoidal (L-shaped) headlamps, with sensors are modern on either side of the grille.

The Blade's design is based on Toyota's design mantra "Vibrant Clarity" which expresses the company's energy and vitality coupled with its more outward, environment-friendly vision.

Compact frame

Despite its compact frame, Toyota said the Blade fulfills the company's stringent Global Outstanding Assessment (GOA) safety guidelines ensuring that the car's structure would provide its passengers high level of protection from most types of collisions or accidents.

Toyota also revealed that it reinforced the car's front seats to protect the driver and front passengers against whiplash.

These features greatly reinforce the supplemental restraint system (airbag) and reinforce the driver's and front passenger's airbags that come standard in the car.

Moreover, the Blade also features a pedestrian-injury-lessening body structure that further reduces injuries in pedestrians during accidents.

Driving stability

Being a high-performance hatchback, the Blade is equipped with a vehicle stability control and a sensor-control system that complements the Blade's front- or all-wheel drive systems and significantly lessen events of skidding, spinning or rolling over during sudden or emergency maneuvers.

A newly designed suspension (including new double wishbone type in the rear) also ensures "superior cruising performance," of the Blade in the highways.

Since the Blade is sold in Japan where there is high level of environmental awareness, Toyota equipped the Blade with an Eco Drive Indicator that lights up when the vehicle is being efficiently operated to raise the driver's awareness of environmentally eco-friendly driving and contribute to higher fuel efficiency.

Highlights of 2006

ANOTHER HOLIDAY SEASON IS UPON US, another year is coming to a close. With the arrival of a brand-new year comes the usual time for assessment, both personal and professional. So much has come and gone in another 12 months of we-must-have-it-now.

Let us look back then, ladies and gentlemen, at the year that will soon pass into memory and the cars that will define how I remember 2006.

Donne Italiane Belle

There will always be a distinct Italian flavor to the past year. A few months back saw my initiation in the Maserati marques with a decent amount of seat time in both the Quattroporte and Coupe, both powered by 4V-Duoselect motors, 4.2-liter V8 engines from Modena, clothed in top shelf, designer sexiness (most noted and complete with interiors that just scream extravagance—it is easy to see how the world-weary motoring hack can be made to grin silly).

So luck would have it, I also made the acquaintance of beautiful lady from Maranello just last week. While our various ways lasted maybe only 20 minutes, the memories from that all-too-short of a time will unfortunately be unforgettable. Immediately meeting with the window down, the subway note of the F430's V8, massaged through an ultra-loaded Tubi system is otherworldly; there is just no better description for it. My fave guitar in a polishing frame moves me with just one flow how's with, there is not be my last.

Heavy rental

The company name Fuji Heavy Industries may not mean to the "everyday motorist," blue one of 16 will likely guess that it is a Japanese manufacturing concern engaged in the production of various industrial toys, big and small.

Tagged to replace the old and lumbering Forester, the Impreza is one of the country's most MPVs is predictably destined to be a best-seller. And it's not the Asian's ability to meet the basic mustang and transport needs of the small, urban Filipino family and how can this model not become the new Corolla or Vios? Oh, those are Toyota's too aren't they? Whatever situation, this car is certain to make Team Toyota complemented by the three-selling, again-topped Toyota.

The return

Finally, 2006 will be the year that the Honda Civic finally made a full return to the Philippine market. Whether did it go one-time sick, haven't a slowest been around? Well, we and no. While the model has been selling steadily since its introduction in the early '90s, there was a point that Honda seemed to have forgotten with the Civic nameplate, its value and value, how-does-and admirably-lasting.

I must, look, after the genius of the late '90s (EK 96) generation) chassis (EK, there was never really any way that the 2001-to-06 models (7th generation) could be called comparable. The Civic became boring, less dynamic and much, much less entertaining. We are fortunate though that the 8th generation FD chassis is a reminder of what makes the Honda Civic the sport compact sweetheart that it is.

Free to drive to the 1.8-liter, 140-bhp base model, the new Civic a best bad in the R20 powered 2.0-liter, 155-horse, 5-speed manual. Torque from the extra displacement just turns an already lively drive into something a little bit more potent and enjoyable. Still powerful enough to drive every day, the bang for buck performance just made the deal. Welcome back. It took a while but the Civic we know and love is back and hopefully, here to stay.

THE CIVIC is fun to drive in the 1.8-liter 140-bhp base model.

THE FORESTER comes to our mind when we hear the word "Subaru."

MY DRIFT

Andre Fabian

The little car with the heart

WITH THE HOPE AND GOODWILL STILL ENERGIZING PEOPLE two days after Christmas, I thought I would tell and retell something I wrote eight years ago.

Once upon a time many years ago, local car assemblers produced a wide range of small, fuel-efficient cars. One of these was a Japanese four-door subcompact model with a small 1.1-liter engine.

When this model was still new on the market, its cute appearance and low fuel consumption attracted many buyers. There were so many units coming off the assembly line, in fact, that it was possible sure of those would be different from all the others. Not especially but in the fact that it was touched by a mischievous **cherub angel and came out with a heart.** And having a heart, it had feelings as sensitive as a puppy dog's. But no one, not even the men working on the assembly line, could notice this.

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

ON THE ROAD

GIR

The new little car with a heart was destined to a dealer's showroom in the last quarter of the year. As it happened, a pair of doting parents bought it as a Christmas gift for their teenage son. On Christmas Day, the teenage son jumped up and down with joy when he saw his gift car. He immediately got in and drove it around the cities villages where he and his parents live. The next day, he showed it off to his friends and they showered him with praises.

But after the holidays were over and classes resumed for the New Year, the teenage son proved to be an irresponsible scoundrel. He pushed the little car to its limits, swerving to avoid bumps and, unknown to him, in the heart. He did not look after the little car properly and did not bring it back to the dealer for scheduled check-ups. He ordered his family driver to bring it to the gasoline station for an oil change, but that was about all the care the little car got.

One day, the teenage son recklessly raced with another car on the highway. Since the other car had a bigger engine, the little car was easily left behind, more so because it was not in good condition. The bearings were worn and lubricated but he did not learn his lesson. The following week, he again engaged another car in a race and this time he had an accident, crashing into the rear of a slow-moving car.

Verge

The teenage son was not seriously injured, but the little car's front end was severely damaged and, unknown to any human being, its little heart was on the verge of breaking. The driving permits tapped on by their son, doubted to sell the little car "as is where is" without repairing it first.

They had a hard time finding any buyers since it was badly damaged. Finally, a last customer offered to buy it at a bargain price. The last operator had the little car repaired and fielded it with his other cars. The little car was driven at least 16 hours a day and had no rest. It was extremely exhausted and its little heart grew sadder with every passing day.

Uncaring

Since it was not built to be a race, after a year and a half of abuse the little car's heart gave out and it suffered a breakdown. The uncaring race operator decided to sell it, but first he had it repaired so that it could have a chance of getting a buyer. He advertised it in a newspaper as a love point, just enough to cover the cost of repairs.

The little car was put on sale during the Christmas season, when cherub angels come down to earth to celebrate the birth of the Child Jesus. One of those visiting cherub angels was the mischievous one who had placed a heart in the little car. Feeling sorry for the little car, the angel arranged it so that a young loving couple would see the ad.

Saved

The young couple had been married for only two years and were not rich, but they had scrimped and saved to buy their first car. When they saw the little car in the race lanes, they fell in love with it despite its being a replacement car. They could not guess that the mischievous cherub angel was hovering overhead, touching their hearts in such a way that they would be charmed by the little car and buy it as their Christmas gift for each other.

Since angels have a lot more foresight than human beings, the young couple proved to be the owners that the little car with a heart deserved. They took excellent care of the little car, repairing and renewing it step by step as the years went by, using their Christmas bonuses, for they were a hardworking pair. The little car's heart was made whole anew and it served the young couple well and lovingly for many years. As for the mischievous cherub angel, he never placed a heart in another car again.

Toyota's 'Taxilog' for the masses

INQUIRER Motoring tests the dual-fuel Avanza 1.3, and yes, the taximeter's flagged down

By Tessa R. Salazar

First of two parts

INQUIRER MOTORING WAS FORTUNATE TO GET hold of Toyota's newest and soon-to-be beast of burden, the Avanza 1.3 liter. Why a future do-it-all workhorse? Toyota has named this variant as its more compact replacement to its legendary TX and Revo lines. And as soon as the dealership gates opened for work the next day after the announcement, a long line of future taxi franchise holders have been a-cingin' and a-knockin'.

But the Avanza is not all about public utilities. There are, uh, "do-more-and" versions of the Avanza, as for the high-brow market. The basic difference among the taxi variant (priced at P665,000), the privately owned 1.3 (P582,000) and the 1.5 G automatic (P775,000) and manual transmission (P750,000) is the third row seat. The Land Transportation Franchising Regulatory Board does not allow the more or eight-seaters for taxis—that means no third row for the metered ones.

Well, to say the least, it was a novelty to be handed a unit ready for charging passengers for every 250 meters they traveled. Toyota equipped the unit with a working taxi meter (situated where the stereo player should be) and a LED "For Hire" just behind the windshield's rear-view mirror. If the taxi meter was not running, the "For Hire" sign blinks bright and, as to avoid being flagged down by desperate commuters during the holiday rush, we had to turn the meter on.

'Taxilog'

That wasn't the only novel item in this particular Avanza unit. Replacing the third row seats was an LPG tank, tastefully hidden by carpet matching, this brings an to only we call this unit the "Taxilog." The rear area where the LPG tank was installed still had a pretty spacious room, which some shrewd joker could fill to be stuffed with a mini kitchen. So, when cruising tech-boot passengers demanded for food, they were immediately handed the menu and offered the breakfast buffet about "fast" food, or eating on the run.

But don't let your mouths water yet. Toyota Motors Philippines will not be churning out LPG-equipped Avanzas as standard OEMs. Future Avanza taxi owners will have to install the LPG systems with cars TMP-accredited suppliers, which for now Toyota officials are mum on revealing. Suffice to say that these suppliers passed rigorous technical and administrative tests administered by Toyota.

LPG system

The Avanza taxi, of course, will come with an LPG-ready receptacle. If the owner/operator decides to give the LPG system a try, the Toyota dealer will get in touch with the recommended supplier who will install the LPG tank.

Toyota said installing the LPG system would cost an additional P88,000 to P98,000.

The taxi meter installation will not be offered in Toyota dealers, however. Customers can have those installed at their preferred suppliers.

The hype surrounding the Avanza is well-founded. Before its Philippine introduction last month, 200,000 Avanzas had already been sold in Asia. The Avanza arrives here as CBU (completely built-up) from Indonesia, others in semi-knocked-down (SKD) in January 2004. It also sold like hot cakes in Malaysia and Thailand, and even as far as Mexico—well it sold like taco shoes. There are also further plans to sell the Avanza to the Middle East and African countries.

It looks like Toyota has another no-nonsense, hardworking contraption for the working masses. Just with a flair for the entertainment. That's probably first with us.

(Next week: But does it have the torque?)

THE STEREO...NOT! This taxi meter can even print out receipts—if only this one had paper. Meter installation will not be offered in Toyota dealers, though. Customers can have those installed at their preferred suppliers.

PUSH MY BUTTON. Still on the By anytime you feel like using LPG (light on the "E" spot means it's on LPG). Light indicator on top tells LPG tank level

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Japan data dent yen; Taiwan stocks at 6-yr high

Trading quiet in most Asian markets due to Christmas holidays

SINGAPORE—THE YEN fell against the euro and the dollar on Tuesday as inflation and consumption data raised further doubts about whether the Bank of Japan will raise interest rates next month.

Trading was quiet in most Asian markets, but Taiwan shares hit a six-year high on hopes that financial ties with China would accelerate, and a regional index reached the latter in a series of record highs.

Oil prices rose more than half a percent as an unusually warm April in the United States looked set to end and after the United Nations agreed sanctions against Iran.

Japan's core consumer price index rose in line with expectations and personal consumption fell less than forecast in November, but the data failed to shift doubts about whether Japanese rates will be lifted from 0.25 percent in January.

"The household spending data was better than expected, but if you ask whether that means there is a 'go' sign for a Bank of Japan rate rise in January, I don't think that's the case," a Japanese trust bank trader said. "I think the axiom in the market is that a rate rise in January is still a bit difficult."

Investors' expectations of a rate hike began to be scaled back last week after BOJ Governor Toshihiko Fukui said Japanese consumption and consumer prices had softened.

The dollar bought around 118.95 yen early yesterday afternoon after hitting a two-month high of 119 yen on electronic trading platform EBS.

The dollar had stood at 118.65 yen in late Tokyo trading on Monday when European and US markets were shut for Christmas.

Tokyo's Nikkei rose 0.5 percent, with the shares that ex-pursue fall in personal consumption pushing Sun Retailing Co. Ltd. up 3.8 percent, but overall activity was low.

"Foreigners seem bearing as off," said Ken Maruta, senior dealer in equities at Shinko Investment. "When volumes is thin ... small orders can easily be the only things that move."

MSCI's broadest index of shares elsewhere in Asia rose up 0.1 percent yesterday afternoon, after earlier touching the latest in a string of peaks matched up over the past two months.

China's main index rose 0.5 percent, even though most shares fell, as investors bought financial heavyweights such as industrial & Commercial Bank of China on hopes they will benefit from changes to the tax system.

Taiwan's benchmark index rose 1.1 percent on its highest in six years, led by financial and chemical companies. Investors cheered news that the central bank would only need a week to set up a legal exchange mechanism between the Taiwan dollar and China's renminbi if it gets the official go-ahead.

South Korea's benchmark index fell 0.22 percent, while Singapore's Straits Times dipped 0.2 percent.

NYMEX crude for February ended down 41 cents to $61.84 a barrel, although early-next this.

Prices had fallen by just over $5 last week, as traders bet on unusually warm weather in the US Northeast would reduce oil demand. But conditions are forecast to grow colder towards the end of this week, soaring assisted by Saturday.

Dealers were also reviewing their attention to Iran, the world's fourth largest crude producer, after the United Nations agreed to impose sanctions aimed at banning imports and exports of materials related to atomic work.

Gold edged up in thin trade to around $634.50 an ounce.

Reuters

RESIDENTS walk near old houses that will be demolished to give way to new buildings in Shanghai, China. Asia's booming giants, China and India, confront daunting challenges as they strive to keep their economies expanding fast enough to raise growing numbers of their 2.2 billion people out of poverty. Reuters

China seen growing about 9.5% in '07

SHANGHAI BEIJING—CHINA'S economy is expected to maintain robust, relatively inflation-free growth next year, a state think-tank and central bank officials said on Tuesday.

The economy would probably grow by around 9.5 percent in 2007 as anticipated then in domestic consumption offset slowing fixed-asset investment and foreign trade, the State Information Center said in a report.

The body, which is part of the National Development and Reform Commission, the top economic planning agency, said that it expected gross domestic product to grow strongly in a range of 9.5 percent to 10.5 percent next year.

"If the economy maintains a steady but fast growth, GDP growth should be at about 9.5 percent," said the report published in the Shanghai Securities News.

The economy is on track to record its fourth straight year of double-digit growth in 2006, but many economists expect it to slow modestly in 2007.

Separately, assistant central bank governor Hong Liang told a forum that he expected consumer inflation to remain steady at within 3 percent next year, as a good grain harvest this year meant pressure on food prices would be limited.

Annual consumer price inflation has remained at below 3 percent all of this year, but it jumped to 3.9 percent in November from 1.4 percent in October largely because of rapid growth in food prices.

Reuters

Housing, health, tech stocks touted as Wall St. sleeper hits

NEW YORK—HOMEBUILDING, TECHNOLOGY and health care did more to hurt portfolios than help this year, but they may well emerge as the sleeper stocks of 2007.

As money managers start identifying their best investments for next year, Lehman Brothers Inc.'s Laggards of 2006 are topping many "must-own" lists.

Fund managers are firms offering opportunity for outperformance as confidence in their sectors shuts some of the best the potential for improvement.

Laggards to leaders

Take homebuilders. It's no secret that homebuilding shares have been one of the worst performers this year, with the Dow Jones Home Construction Index dropping as much as 40 percent in the spring before the bottom fell out of the housing market.

Despite a bit of a comeback, the group's down 20 percent on the year.

"One thing is certain, the recovery in performance in these groups will precede the upturn in housing activity," said John Kosnik, portfolio manager of the iShares Cohen Fligh Dividend Equity Fund.

Health care stocks have been little better. They had the poorest performance of the 10 major industry sectors comparing the Standard & Poor's 500 index in 2006 due to big Drops in medical device makers such as Boston Scientific Corp. and St. Jude Medical Inc.

And, of course, there's the tech sector, no place for another year of underperformance. The Nasdaq Composite, the second half of 2006 a drawing moves managers' eyes as 2007 approaches.

Reconstructing builders

The challenge for a rebound in housing-related stocks is to see in place conservatively managers say.

Already the Dow homebuilder index, comprising such stocks as DR Horton, Centex Corp. and D.R. Horton Inc., has rebounded more than 16 percent since September.

With concerns over its speculation and calculations for homebuilders, investors like fund are already sensing the start of a rebound in terms of positive earnings estimate revisions by Wall Street analysts.

Edgar Peters, chief investment officer at Boston-based Prudgett's Asset Management, shares Gould's sentiment, saying if interest rates remain stable, it's possible that the housing market will do well.

Borrowing costs on 30-year fixed-rate mortgages, including fees, were up 6.19 percent—before year ago levels of 6.22 percent.

Poised for take off

Shares in technology, particularly in the computer storage and software groups, could emerge as sleeper stocks as well.

"Technology has been very high on our radar due to constant need for major product upgrades to drive productivity initiatives in areas of telecom, data storage, and data security," said Fred Dickson, chief market strategist at D.A. Davidson in Lake Oswego, Oregon.

Dickson, like many managers, agrees at BOA Research, said the steady increase in non-consumer growth as a result of increased bandwidth and broadband service should drive up data storage demand for the foreseeable future.

Pugsley said the storage group remains a "very attractive area" for him in particular.

Software shares have enjoyed a powerful rally in recent months and investors could look to book profits as a period of consolidation sets in, he said.

"But we doubt this will mark a cyclical short-term pause because software profit margins have more upside," said Pugsley.

Oracle Corp., Adobe Systems and Symantec Corp. are among the stocks to consider in the group.

Another sector to be bullish on tech. The Nasdaq Composite Index, for all sees up only 9.50 percent in road returns, supporting more gains in 2007.

Health care did no better, up only 6.2 percent this year, dragged down by fears on biotechs. The worst performers in the sector comprise year-to-date, including 50 percent, followed by St. Jude, down 25.7 percent.

Gail Dudack of Dudack Research Group said both health care and tech consistently rank at or near the top of lists ranking the highest earnings growth forecasts for 2007, latest 12-month forward price/earnings ratios to 25-year averages and lowest estimated 2007 price earnings to growth (PEG) ratios.

In addition, the health care and tech sectors have seen year-over-year earnings growth rates that beat their companies' index in each quarter in 2007.

Reuters

METRO

Citizen's Call

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INQUIRER

'Made in Taiwan' tech label given fresh spin

Territory evolves from manufacturing to design

TAIPEI—TAIWAN'S COMPUTER MAKERS ARE morphing from simple contract manufacturers into designers and innovators as they fight for survival in a competitive scene.

Four out of five new notebook computers are now designed on the island, an Taiwan making up more than half of all phones to PCs around Taiwan is "the most positive hold" inevitably to a "let's innovate" one, transforming the "Made-in-Taiwan" tend.

The change is partly driven by new business opportunities, but also by sheer competition as companies try to set themselves apart under their innovative designs.

Some of the world's top electronics makers, from PC makers Dell Inc. and Hewlett-Packard Co. to cell phone makers Nokia and Motorola, are looking to domestic behind-the-scenes players with names like Quanta Computer Inc. and Asustek Computer Inc. to not only make, but also design their latest gadgets.

Dell, the world's top PC maker, said that over 50 percent of its notebook PCs are now designed in Taiwan by its locally-based teams working closely with its manufacturing partners.

Dell, whose top Taiwan manufacturing partners include Quanta, set up its design center in Taiwan in 2002 with 50 people for PC and notebook development.

Since then the facility has grown more than six-fold to 300 staffers.

As competition in the fast-paced IT world intensifies, Taiwanese firms are trying everything they can to give their clients added value services.

Taiwan computer makers such as Quanta, Asustek and Lite-On Technology Corp. have all created their own design teams, earning reputations as new product pioneers and winning awards in global competitions.

Having design teams close to the manufacturers has also become more strategically important, as their ability to shift their production to those nearby is restricted China.

Contract makers are using their design capabilities to distinguish themselves from one another, creating sophisticated design capabilities can attract customers who want everything from MP3 players to notebooks to mobile phones.

"It's now point you can't compete on cost alone, so you have to earn in design," said Morton Wu-Josh, a product design manager for Asustek.

The move to design marks a turning of age for Taiwan firms, which have migrated from low-margin assembly work, or "Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM), in the 1980s to a new type of work, called original design manufacturing, or ODM, starting in the 1990s.

As competition heats up, the level of design services offered in Taiwan has increased as well, as players try to distinguish themselves in industries where margins are already razor-thin.

As a result, the island is earning a name for its new generation of young engineers and designers who are winning awards in global competitions for their work.

"Perceptions regarding Taiwan's design has really changed a lot in the past few years or so," said Wu-Josh.

While awards may be a pat on the back, the Taiwanese firms are less motivated by prestige and payment than by sheer necessity.

Reuters

Inflation expected to further slow down in '07

Rise in consumer prices next year seen to range from 4.3% to 4.8%

By Michelle V. Ramos

INFLATION IS EXPECTED TO FURTHER slow down in 2007, partly due to a projected increase in global oil prices and the absence of a plan for another oil hike.

The National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) said that inflation next year would probably settle in anywhere between 4.3 and 4.8 percent.

For 2006, the Neda said, full-year inflation could hit an average of only 6.0 percent. The rise reflected a deceleration from 2005, when the rate hovered at the 7-percent level.

"Oil prices are not rising significantly, raising parity in prices of agricultural and other products," said Dennis Arroyo, Neda director for policy and planning.

Citing external inputs, Arroyo said that Russia has raised the top spot in terms of volume of oil production from Saudi Arabia, whose production was often subject to Middle East conflicts.

Arroyo said that the Doha trade, the benchmark used in setting oil prices, is not expected to hit an average of at least $63 a barrel, which is not too far removed from current prices.

The Philippines, heavily dependent on imported oil, is adversely affected by increases in global oil prices. The country imports over 90 percent of its oil requirements.

Arroyo also said that since the Bureau of Value Added Tax has been implemented this year, substantial cuts in commodity prices had already taken place in 2006, and would no longer be expected next year.

"In 2007, we will come from a high base, so inflation will slow down," he said.

The Arroyo administration is also not expected to push for additional tax hikes next year following the implementation of the VAT law this year.

The VAT law, which is estimated to yield about P75 billion in additional taxes for the government this year alone, is considered to be the centerpiece of the Arroyo administration's fiscal reform agenda.

With the help of the VAT law, the government expected to bring down its budget deficit to P42 billion next year, and to zero by 2008. The deficit is projected to hit between P80 billion and P90 billion this year, from the P146.8 billion posted last year.

The VAT law which was strongly opposed while being deliberated in Congress, expanded the coverage of the VAT to include previously exempted oil and electricity among others. It also increased the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent, and corporate income tax from 32 to 35 percent.

The Department of Finance said the government would not push for up to one-fifth hike in 2007 and would simply continue on adhering the promised revenues from the planned VAT law.

Arroyo said this would help further slow down inflation next year.

For this year, the slowdown in inflation is attributed to the strengthening of the peso and stable oil price increases.

After hovering in the P44-to-dollar level as of 2005, the peso strengthened to the P49-to-dollar level until rising dollar inflows and exchange investments and remittances from overseas Filipino workers.

A stronger peso makes imported goods cheaper, therefore tempering the increase in domestic prices.

PPA mulls 15% tariff hike in cargo handling

THE PHILIPPINE PORTS AUTHORITY IS considering a new round of cargo-handling rate increases next year, sources said.

According to PA general manager Oscar Inciong, Asian Terminals Inc. (Ati) and Manila International Container Terminal Services Inc. (MICTSI) and Asian Terminals Inc. (ATI), the country's two biggest port operators, had asked for a 15-percent increase in their cargo-handling fees as the government is considering a 15-percent hike in February this year.

"Since they only got a 15-percent tariff increase, we may have to consider whether to grant another 15-percent next year," Inciong said.

ICTSI and ATI had said the proposed 30-percent increase would help offset rising interest rates, among others.

Shipping groups are expected to oppose the proposed increase if business does not pick up early next year.

Cargo movements dropped by 5 percent in the third quarter of this year, and foreign container traffic fell 6 percent to the same period.

The Association of International Shipping Lines, in fact, has long been urging the two port operators to help the strike-ops amid modest container movement.

The Coalition for Port Modernization, meanwhile, was reported to have sought a rollback in tariff rates.

Inciong said the PPA will summon various stakeholders to public hearings until next to discuss the proposed tariff changes.

— Rio T. Chiluwalan

Globe's wireline unit sees cut in subscribers' fees

By Rio T. Chiluwalan

BINGE COMMUNICATIONS INC., THE wireline subsidiary of the Ayala-led Globe Telecom Inc., may lower service charges for landline subscribers due to the continuing exposure of the group to cheaper DSL dollars.

In a filing with the Philippine Telecommunications Commission, Binge said the peso strengthened to P49.84 against the greenback this month, compared to the base exchange rate of P28.24 to the dollar in July 1996.

The result is a negative exchange rate adjustment factor of 0.346 percent as of December. This figure is actually lower than the rate that was seen in the first quarter of 2006. In March, the dollar was at P51.02 and the Cora was computed at 20.6 percent.

Under its service charge for the NTC, Binge gained to telephone operators, allowing them to automatically adjust local exchange rates by one percent for every 1 percent increase or decrease in the peso-dollar exchange.

Because of this, Globe "may have to make local number changes," a company official said.

The official said service charges helps the telecom firm recover quickly. It also urges peso helps keep service rates down.

Binge provides residential and business wireline services, as well as wireless prepaid and prepaid telephone lines. DSL services do not limit, but Internet services.

Franchising seen as key to regional market integration

By Ronne M. Domingo

LOCAL FRANCHISERS ARE PUSHING FOR their business models as a way of advancing efforts toward economic integration among members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, as the bloc gets set for an Asean Economic Community in 2015.

Susie Lee, chair emeritus of the Philippine Franchise Association, proposed for so-called franchise exchange programs that would pave the way for seasoned offer-enough franchise operators and franchisees in the region.

Lee said the programs could take off as Asean successful agricultural, international franchises have achieved so far, especially those based in the Philippines, Singapore and Malaysia.

"Regional integration in the field of franchising would start through a (trade show) where we can send franchisors and franchisees could hold exhibits, and where each country's franchising profile could be showcased, including information on how to do franchising in each country," he explained.

Lee added that the program could also cover franchisees in more mature countries that have successfully put up operations overseas.

In the Philippines, such franchises include fast-food chain Jollibee, which has outlets in California, Guam and Saipan in the United States; Vietnam, Indonesia and Brunei.

Lee said the franchising push could also be given a boost with complementary efforts in the business and travel sector.

Rico Hizon finds new home at Fairways Tower

Very few Filipinos have retained their good BBF in the country. It is thus remarkable that those who have already thrived and have exceptionally high overseas earnings of their lives still maintain a high regard for the Philippines.

Though he permanently resides and leads a very successful broadcast journalism career in Singapore, ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) business news anchor Rico Hizon makes it a point to visit the Philippines with his wife Marianne at least eight times every year. In both their families living in Metro Manila, they always come over to their respective sides to maintain their close-knit relationships.

After eight years of going back and forth and discussing possible investments, the couple decided to buy a condominium unit that conveniently offers a place to stay while they are in the country. At that time, Hizon felt that owning a house is more rewarding and harder to maintain. Condominium living felt like a logical choice for them.

However, condo-hunting was not an easy task as nearby units being offered would either take years to finish or were simply above their budget.

He was then made aware of One-Bonifacio Place, Philtown's first venture into high-rise residential projects. He was impressed with the quality, style and workmanship that were evident in every aspect of the building. Therefore he came to a decision to acquire a unit from Philtown's newest project in Bonifacio Global City. The Fairways Tower, a 28-story exclusive residential condominium that offers maximum convenience in a strategic location.

Rico Hizon with wife Marianne and children Ryan and Angie

Rico shares time with his wife, Marianne, together with their children

Rico expressed his interest in acquiring a Philtown project because he knew personally Philtown's chairman Jose Concepcion III, which explains it's trust and confidence on Philtown.

Philtown is best known for its development and selling of industrial estates, middle-income vertical residential projects and high-end condominiums that provide resilient lifestyle to the country. Philtown has made its mark as "Builders of Masterpieces" with having One Rockwell, Rockwell Tower, Proscenium, 30 th, Taft Residences and Fairways Towers.

A cozy and relaxing abode is just perfect to compensate for the lifestyle that Hizon considers in his profession. With a vigorous schedule of news gathering, reporting and attending editorial meetings, he works as a news anchor that requires utmost attention and alertness in this working environment. A vacation in the Philippines, which he considers a very important agenda in his life, should be deemed worthy by living in a place that can take you away from the outside noise and let you sit back and relish while watching breathtaking sceneries at bay. The Manila Golf Club view that the Fairways Tower offers served their purpose for Rico and his wife, Marianne which made their yearly vacation even more appealing.

Marianne, in particular, expressed her desires to decorate and finally move in to "their own home". Rico offers excellent amenities that other resort accommodates their growing son, Migz's need for playing space.

"We bought the unit two months ago because we fell in love with it, with the convenience that nothing will block our view since it's overlooking a golf course," Hizon said. "What Fairways Tower can offer is just what we need."

Along with Rico's apparent love for his hometown is his confidence that the Philippines produce world-class objects that can be at par with the rest of the world. Before he was hired at BBC, Rico learned the ropes from bottom up dealing with the ups and downs of local journalism. The ultimate test in his career ensued when he finally found his niche in business reporting just when most reporters ventured into the other action-packed beats. When foreign employers were looking for an Asian-based business broadcast journalist, he stepped up and took early flight to the Chairman with a new dimension from his experiences in his reporting stint here. Luckily, it worked for the Asia-Pacific market.

"When I joined CNBC in 1998, I was the only Filipino reporter and news anchor. When I joined BBC World in 2002, I was also the only Filipino working there," Hizon said.

His television worked wonders and became his ultimate foundation for his personal advocacy that translated into his brainchild—a fusion of international business journalism and community service called GoodNewsFilipinos.com. This website, that gets 20,000 to 30,000 hits a day, reports the good amongst Filipinos that are worthy to celebrate about. This endeavor seeks to shun away from the politics that consistently centered the country. "There's so much good news in the Philippines and the Filipinos that deserve to be emphasized and the information not only here but in other countries as well," Hizon said.

Rico takes pride in all his investments and put a great deal of time and effort in making them right and profitable. Fairways Tower just passed his complete vote in Philtown's unwavering consistency in delivering masterpieces on time. Having finally found a home he can call his own, despite living permanently in Singapore, promises more trips to the Philippines. Rico, who is one of the Outstanding Young Men (TOYM) awardees for broadcast journalism excellence, has also secured his book between him and the Philippines. His success ultimately reflects how gratifying it is that successful Filipinos recognize and appreciate their roots.

"I love my country and I'm proud to be a Filipino. And it is indeed an honor to be representing my country on the global broadcasting stage," he said.

For inquiries and reservations, call (632) 723 to 28 or 886-3724 or email at sales@philtown.com.ph. Visit www.philtown.com

OFWs launch global coop

BALIKPINAS MULTI-PURPOSE COOPERative, a leading global cooperative of Filipino professionals in the Philippines and abroad, shall hold its Mega Launch and Expo on Jan. 13 and 14 at the Shangrila Hall 2, S.T. Building, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City.

With its theme, "Toward self-sufficiency and prosperity: Empowering the global Filipino", the affair will showcase the coop's international partners, accredited suppliers, government agencies, and other exhibitors. It will feature a pandesiong shopping arcade, free seminars, travel and tourism, business and investment opportunities, career development and job fair, beauty and wellness services, medical tourism, raffle prizes, and entertainment.

The Mega Launch and Expo will be the Balikpinas' first major event for 2007, assuring the other coop projects are being planned for 2007 are trade fairs and assemblies in key provinces and cities, and in selected countries where there are OFWs and dependents.

Balikpinas is a non-traditional, multi-purpose cooperative founded by reputable Filipino professionals, overseas Filipino workers, the Mayors, and their friends and relatives in the Philippines. Inspired by successful coop-

members in other countries, Balikpinas aims to provide personal, professional, and social services to members and related markets, as well as to promote entrepreneurship and love of country. It has members worldwide, including its main countries in Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Dubai, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States.

Key government officials, cabinet members, and local government officials are expected to grace the Balikpinas Mega Launch and Expo. The two-day affair is being held under the the boards of DPWs, Balikpinas, Filipino professionals, their families and friends. There will be product samplings and promotions by Balikpinas' partner vendors and institutions. At the same time, membership is open to OFWs, facilitators, Filipino professionals and their families during the Mega Launch and Expo.

The Balikpinas Mega Launch and Expo is being held in partnership with Allied Bank.com, Enchanted Kingdom, Philippine Airlines, Department of Tourism and Department of Labor.

Interested parties may call Balikpinas at 636- 5000 or log on to www.balikpinas.com.ph.

'MAKE A CHILD HAPPY' MALL TOUR

Robinsons Malls and Robinsons Inc officers and employees pose with Jollibee's Jolly Bee during the launch of the Jollibee Group Foundation Inc.-owned Make A Child Happy's second-month project of SM Foundation Inc. aimed to bring Christmas cheer to street children, orphans, children from depressed areas and children with special needs. The activity includes games, singing of carols, Jollibee Jollibee and Jollibee Jollibee's visit to the Jollibee Jollibee Jollibee

LIFESTYLE

Editor Chelo Bansil-Perezosa Chief of Correspondents Pete Pastor

The year that was

Before we say hello to 2007, 2bU! takes you on a ride through the year that was—the people, the places, the music, the fashion and the technology that made 2006 the awesome year that it was

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THE BEST OF 2006

You voted, we counted. Here are the results.

BEST BAND

Kamikazee rocked your 2006. OPM was big this year and you love it. Other favorite bands included Urbandub, Up, Hurtbise Street, Barkitoo and Bamboo.

BEST SINGER

Get right on the screamers, Manila's crazy nightspots—and the record sales. And puntiness Beyoncé too.

BEST MUSIC CHANNEL

You said MTV kept you glued to your screen.

BEST BOOK

Be Your Own was to Harry Pot ter release this year, 2006 readers went for many different books but a lot of you agreed on "Be Your Most Sexy."

BEST TV CHANNEL

Action keeps you awake. ABS was your favorite TV channel for 2006.

BEST CONCERT

Pinoys Yes thought Pussycat Dolls Live in Manila was hot. Jet. Set.

BEST ACTOR AND ACTRESS

You loved Anne Hathaway as Andrea in "The Devil Wears Prada" and Leonardo DiCaprio in "The Departed." But when it comes to TV series, you love Hugh Laurie from "House."

BEST TREND

Paper bags. We never thought dainty would ever be called a trend. You still love your Hawaiianas but at the last quarter of the year, you gave your attention to a cutesy, sweet trend... Krispy Kremes.

BEST HAIRSTYLE

This year, you went for bangs.

BEST ACCESSORY

Leggings are number one for you.

BEST SHOP

Ever claim to it as one giant shop. Mall of Asia was one of your favorite shopping stops for 2006.

BEST GADGET

You gadgets look your beauty essay—the iPod is all in forms and the Moviemax.

BEST TV SHOW

It doesn't matter whether you like "Mr. Drummy" or "Melbourne," Coco's "Mamayo" was your favorite show of 2006.

BEST SONG

Reminiscent "Hawak" had you singing and rocking. You also liked Jethroesteve "Bear" and Join the Club's "Nobody."

BEST MOVIE

Another fine crib for books that are turned into movies. "The Devil Wears Prada" got your thumbs up.

BEST MAGAZINE

Whether you think how all the magazine awards this year went.

BEST CINEMA

Where doesn't a movie ever movie, you say you found in Greenbelt 3 that you've been loving your IMAX experience at the Mall of Asia.

BEST AUTHOR

In the absence of J.K. Rowling, you turned to Mitch Albom.

BEST BRAND

Brand-mad readers but you know favorite brands this year.

BEST RESTAURANT

Fine food, fine ambiance and fine company. That's what you look for in a restaurant.

BEST DISH

You like your rice on the go. McDonald's Chicken Supreme McRice Burger got the nod this year.

BEST FASHION DESIGNER

Bril Tejada was your favorite designer of 2006.

BEST WEBSITE

You can't decide. But still love Friendster but you love YouTube as well.

BEST ATHLETE

No doubt about it, you like how he throws his punches. Manny Pacquiao is your athlete of the year.

BEST UAAP TEAM

You're still reeling from the win. The DLSU Green Tigers were voted team of the year.

BEST NCAA TEAM

Revving red. The San Sebastian Red Lions were your best NCAA team.

BEST MODELS

Couple Bergy and Denise ruled your runway this year.

BEST COMMERCIAL

Five commercials kept you from switching the channel.

BEST FITNESS REGIMEN

Walking is great exercise, interesting too.

Music and madness

Text and photos by Maul V. Rojas

STEAM ASPHODISIAC EJECTICS (SALE, Quezon) to sudden line-up shuffles (Sugarbox, anyone?), band breakups (Spy Spy, Twisted Otaku) to final albums (not to not naming any!), and Pocoy footwork (Joey delos Reyes) to concerts with a cause (Bookfil events), 2006 spawned not many literary murder machines in quench anyone's thirst...

We asked some of music's in-the-know peeps what they thought were the best and worst in local music this year.

On the musical front... Finally, 2006 saw the release of highly-anticipated albums from overseas superstars. John Mayer's hatten of blues and rock in "Continuum" was one of this year's most lauded, generating perfect reviews from international and local publications alike. My Chemical Romance's "The Black Parade" made many aspire on their awards, with the album moving smoothly from one dimensional emo to experimental (Queen plus Lita Ford) with death as a main subject (a pretty dark interesting). Muse's fourth album "Black Holes and Revelations" has made the initial halo practically a household name, and the new location album "Light Grenades" saw the band veering away from 2004's confused "Cove" and rekindling their "Morning Bird" sound.

The year's underrated debut was by James Morrison. His first release, "Undiscovered," went virtually well, undiscovered by the masses, but it's certainly one worth checking out—not another tall fallen one Idler 121.

Josh Groban's third album "Awake" is topping the charts for a good reason: his sound is a staple (the result of collaborations with Imogen Heap and Lebanese's Mark Mancina) but still retains his unique pop-classical appeal.

Avril's nonstyle-Grammy winner John Legend's "Once Again" proved that the sophomore slump was not applicable to him. He went back to old-school R&B, a sound that had been neglected on Top 40 radio in recent years.

And of course, pop had its hey-day, too, this year. Hilt and Pili garnered back-to-back concerts and multi-platinum sales, Dreamer and Justin n'Sl rocked the airwaves, and Dats Ribon, for a few months at least, looked everyone into thinking that she actually had a singing career (thank you, Sari Stanley!)."—Jade Macarilao, SONY-BMG Label Manager

"Best albums: Gaptain's "This is Kamikaze" Mayon albums: Mediator's "It Began" four years ago getting a jail on my birthday. Music two months after the Malice dream."—Bell Marimar, Ekis

"Best: The first Philippine International Jazz Festival last January, Jaspe Morales' album, Timeless; SOTI's reunion at "No Retro, and the Bossa Nova explosion!"—Bobinath Diaz, Happy Meals

"Best thing was that I got to open for indie label and live release of Quasar's "2 Step More." The worst thing is the closing of MTV Philippines."—Andy Chamung, Mobile Industry Executive

"The best thing was Teresa Bermudal Up Close no doubt's 'Fragmented' and Parachute's 'Strangely Paired' were the best Filipino albums of the year. While Ang Bandang Shirley's self-titled debut was my favorite OPM. The worst thing was the band of disappearing new albums by my favorite bands like The Sid's Without Brothers, The Ditches' Post Impressions of The Sid's and the Incredible Incredible Kami's 'Jesus' by The Killing!"—Quesh Gonzaga, Blue Opic and music video director

"The best would be 'Sino Sikat?' and Up Close no boxer!"—Armor Muñoz, Shirley and the Boys

"My best album would be Nicomitus Show! by the Sidjoyestas! The details of this release were, excellent from the manager to the consistency in the studio sessions."—Jessi Corpuz, Kjwan and Happy Meals

"The best in music was Kamikazee and the new release album!"—Abbie Alfaro, Spoon

"I honestly and objectively think Up Dharma Down's 'Fragments' is the best album of 2006. The worst is—hum. 2006 is the ongoing 80 onslaught where everyone is 1. A.D.D. or 2. A cover band obsessive and not it's all trance, crappy bass dance, or electric, deep house with buttitude female vocal sing-along pop ditties that those 'Get' play or what one dismiss to as the music biz, 'instrumentalist' clubs in the city. Thankfully, chick-head electronica seems to have gone away, unless up to something they're not."—Eric Barcenilla, Music Freak of Three Recordings and Groove Station

"Best: The 80's Tribute and 'Awake' by Kamikazee. Please, the loss of 105.3 C Lite."—Alexis Escueta, Interspace

"Best: 'Boom Tarat Tarat!' Best manager!"—Ria Perez, Papel

"Best: the bands. Worst: 'Boom Tarat Tarat.'"—Jay Contreras, Kamikazee

"Most bands are touring the country these days, but Yeng is one from of the local guys. And the best CD was 'The Reader's Lane.'"—Ellen Sandoval, Sugarbox

"The best was music videos by Patches Inquero and Mikee Jamora! World class and awe inspiring! The worst would be the budgets given to music video directors!"—Winny, music video director

"The music scene brought people together in a big way. Obviously ain't no issue anymore. That's probably the best thing that happened in 2006 for me."—Arjay Millare, Up Dharma Down

"Best CDs: Sugarbox, Kamikazee, Parokya ni Edgar, Kuerdas 4:00 album (the three works more again!). Best event: Black Eyed Pea and Nouvelle Orda concert (Pinoys rock the world stage). Worst event: Britney becomes single. (her internet photos are TOXIC!)"—Jamie Hayfield.

"Best: Up Dharma Down. Worst: would be the Pinoycentric campaign. The worst album would be all those artistas running out with crappy dance albums!"—Gab Alipio, Urbandub

JOSEL Corpuz, Happy Meals and Kjwan

JUDE Macarilao, SONY-BMG Philippines Label Manager

BELL Marimar, Ekis

EBI Gozon, Sugarbox

Loving the limelight

By Nito Mark M. Sablan
Staff Correspondent

IN THE LOCAL MOVIE INDUSTRY, it usually takes so much before one gets the proper recognition befitting a true star.

However, nowadays, with the proliferation of reality shows and contests, one simple stint to an interview question, one could-we-not-and-dared or even one simple song can propel an unknown to unexpected stardom. Just look at our examples:

Andrew Wolff

Still big bad pawn for his alleged fooling of actress and then-girlfriend Gloria Garci and his supposed "setup" of Jeinnie Bunoz, Andrew gains conscious infamous when he participated in a celebrity boxing match. Supposedly cheating during his match with Jhonard Montano, brother of actor Gene, Andrew almost got down and dirty with the actor. As, those said he was ready for a rematch or for a decent fight, but not a lot of people were interested to watch that scenario.

Kris Aquino

How to become more famous when you're longest big-time friends ("record's get married, and then come out with it, and then get pregnant. That is what the talent out favorite Presidential daughter did.

Ina Muzo

It didn't take long for "Wowowee" mainstay Ina Muzo to score roles in several shows such as a couple of endorsements. And now that she has just been totally featured as the cover girl of a men's magazine, her number of male fans have probably tripled. Must Ina loved her the moment she showed her true self: a vocal and confess wild child who seemed to like anything and everything. In 2007, her name, I predict, will be even bigger, although I'm not so sure if it would be good or bad news for her.

Rustara Padilla

He didn't win in the Philippines' version of "Big Brother," but he emerged triumphant in the end, in a spy stint who finally came out of the closet and who could now be accepted and loved for his talent, more not self. Rustara is definitely back in the biz, and can now be seen in the "Da Zoo Emmerald" movie with Da Zoo Pedia.

Mae Morales

Sure, she wasn't like your next-door African-American. She's also hella-cut like typical and supported blackish and Whitney songs to center pieces. Sure, she can hit those high notes just like many other Filipinos. But she's the first-ever Philippine Idol, so she has a place in this list.

Eric Santos

When Erik and sexy comedienne Sofia Mae Quines admitted they were a couple, many people raised their eyebrows. Why? Because many people believe Erik is gay. They think that it's just a ploy to combine these two sexy individual careers. However, Erik and Sofia Mae think they do love one another, and they are very much together as a romantic couple.

Bargy Manotoc

Bargy may be on three every night partying and attending the country's hottest events, but he's not on every, if you get what I mean. But when he guested on the crash-vocal talk show of DJ Mo Twister, Bargy finally got to taste of the tough life when he dropped names such as Gina Alvendez alongside words like sex. If that's not enough, he allegedly had a (late) night with sugar Ian de Leon's tita Jon. All these, plus those rumors of him cussing for public effect!

Mo Twister

Congratulations to DJ Mo Twister for making the most successful comeback of the year with his radio show on 89.9 called "Good Times with Mo Twister."

Well, all the questions he's been asking for guests (plus the juicy answers, of course!). Mo has definitely added some spice to the local celebrity scene. Its simply asking the questions even you wanted to ask but can't.

Alyssa Alano

Mention the song "Kiss Me" to one talented head and chances are it's coincidence to either Alyssa Alano, more known as the Internet Bikini girl. Alyssa's career kicked to fame with a performance of the said song prepared exclusively for their promo history on GMA 7's "Walang Tulugan with Master Showman."

That clip was uploaded to YouTube, but with accompanying lyrics intentionally spelled incorrectly based on her pronunciation. A million clicks after, Alyssa is now a mainstay of several shows on GMA. She's captivating on her, often, English-speaking skills, so expect her to use this language all the time.

E-mail the author at mar.kablan_25@yahoo.com

ALYSSA Alano

MOTHSTER (above) and Kris Aquino

Motorola iDJ: Iconic Archetypes

Now on its second year, the Motorola iDJ has spread its influence to greater heights, tapping more people from the kaleidoscopic world of music, fashion, school, and the media.

Tagged as "**iDJ: The Rise of the MOTOROKR iDJs**", the search aimed to measure the country's best and brightest DJs, with the help of the MOTOROKR E2 headset. With the amazing Bluetooth technology equipped in the MOTOROKR E2, the participants used the phone to spin their tracks. It is this feature that gave birth to the iDJ concept, having amateur DJs play songs using the MOTOROKR E2 in a wild and wicked competition that only Motorola could get together. The winner on each night of the iDJ series went home with a MOTOROKR E2.

Studio Mixdigs. Scenes: Promenade, Greenhills. The launch night gathered top society media such as JR Isaac (Phil. Star), Karla Abdallan (Phil. Tatler) DJ Ledesma (Manual), Ben Constantino (Chalk) and Tala Diaz (Phil. Daily Inquirer). DJ Ledesma hyped the crowd by playing all-time favorite 80s music. This eventually earned him to be the night's iDJ.

Next Gen. Embassy Super Club VIP, The Fort. From the media to the next-gen, Motorola hosted the fashionistas. Dressing their emerged style was Bubbles Paraiso, Chanvesaire Palomar, Phoenesia Barranda, Tessa Ongpin and Bobby Manotoc. Playing a combination of hip hop, jazz, electronica and metal, it was Bobby's turn to bring home that MOTOROKR E2.

Celebrity Spin. Embassy Super Club VIP, The Fort. The culminating night of the iDJ series was graced by Paulo Paraiso, Mark Dolor, Rico Robles, KC Montero and Sam Oh. In the end, with the 90s music as his repertoire, chosen as the top among the contenders was Paulo Paraiso.

From last year's use of a specific music genre as the competition's thematic concept, Motorola found a way of expanding its reach by gathering people because of their iconic archetypes. Having them party all-night in the hottest party places, the night was surely made more fun because of the unique way of music spinning. Thanks to MOTOROKR E2.

NIKKI Morales

2006 scene-stealers

By Mike Mark M. Sabio
24/7/Correspondent

HOLLYWOOD IS OVERFLOWING with interesting and headline-worthy personalities. Everyone is famous for a particular reason.

But whenever a year is almost to end, it is always fun to single out the seriously controversial and most-talked-about ones, thanks to their romantic lives (marriage, divorce, separation), life-altering decisions (surgery) and interesting contributions to the industry (negatives, box-office/net earnings?).

Here are some names that would forever be synonymous with 2006.

Shiloh Nouvel Jolie-Pitt

Born in Namibia last May 27, the first biological child of Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie was introduced to the world in exclusive and expensive photos that were featured on the June 5 issue and the US mag People (and of course later through the October 2006 issue of Vanity Fair, with Annie Leibovitz-shot photos of the family.

Joseph Barbera

One half of the duo responsible for cartoons such as "The Flintstones," "Top Dog" and "Scooby Doo," Joseph Barbera passed away this month at the age of 95.

Steve Irwin

The "Crocodile Hunter" host sadly passed away last Sept. 4 when a stingray barb pierced his chest while he was filming a documentary on Australia's Great Barrier Reef.

Aaron Spelling

The man behind such iconic hit shows as "Charlie's Angels," "Dynasty" and "Hawaii and Fourth" passed away at his Los Angeles home this December. The father of actress Tori...[illegible] known as Dennis in the 90's comedy show "Beverly Hills 90210"—Aaron was 83 when he died.

BABY ready. Suri Cruise

SAD ENDING. Steve Irwin.

(is linked on the Internet)

Suri Cruise

Born last April 18, Suri is famous not just because her parents are Katie Holmes and Tom Cruise, but because she was kept away from the public and "introduced" only six months ago.

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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2006

DUT OF the chest. Lance Bass

Lance Bass

Appearing on the cover of People Magazine with "His face" as the main blurb, Bass revealed in the interview that during his days with 'NSync, he didn't want to seem pawns everything by telling people he was gay. Lance is going out with Reuben Lehmkuhl of the "Amazing Race" fame.

Neil Patrick Harris

Harris, more popularly known as that kid genius in the '90s show "Doogie Howser, M.D.," also admitted he was gay to People Magazine.

"I am happy to dispel any rumors or misconceptions and am quite proud to say that I am a very content gay man living my life to the fullest, and I feel most fortunate to be working with wonderful people in the business [show]."

Daniel Craig

In honor of James Bond fans weren't delighted with the new actor cast to play 007, for while Bond lost viewers, Craig gained some fans as well for his darker, more gritty take on the famous movie character.

Brandon Routh

Brandon won a vocal endorsement before wowing the Superman rights, but many were semi-sore when they saw Routh in the movie, fund director Bryan Singer. "Brandon is an extremely fine actor who possesses the physical qualifications of Clark Kent/Superman. Not to also embodies the legacy and history of this character in a way that makes me certain he's the right choice."

Taylor Hicks

Named by People Magazine as the hottest bachelor of the year, Taylor the fool (here) was this year's American Idol.

Ozzy Lusth

Even before joining the reality show "Survivor: Cook Islands" (where he was a runner-up), Ozzy was already a reality-TV star via Playboy TV's "Pantomite," dubbed "the only TV dating program that shows everything." And when they say everything, they mean everything. Video clips of Ozzy in the nude are floating in cyberspace.

Nicole Richie

Emerging the fifteen twins, Kate Bosworth and Lindsay Lohan when it came to weight has this year, Nicole's chainsaw-hugely lamb, cried loved once, him and everyone else who saw her in her full-skin and bones self.

Lindsay Lohan

Reminded by tech, ally-skinned lost Brandon Davis as "Screwmula," Lo Lohan made a list of headlines in 2006 because of her romantic relationships, her weight loss and alleged clingon.

Paris Hilton

Our fave heiress in the Celebrity of 2006 for her transformation into a recording artist. Sure, "Stars Are Blind" sounded like a poor copy of Gwen Stefani, while "Nothing in This World" seemed like a Kylie Minogue rip-off. But let's admit it...many sang along to Paris, who could actually carry a tune.

Ashlee Simpson

Jessica's little sis took over the stage from her this year. After her caricatured lip-synching "Saturday Night Live" episode in 2004, Ashlee was booed this year with her throwdown in April and her decision to reject Playboy's $1 million offer to pose for the men's magazine.

Britney Spears

The Princess of Pop made mommy mistakes in private, got pregnant in baby-tumbles two, and after her divorce from Kevin Federline, was recently photographed climbing in and out of cars wearing no underwear, together with her new friend, Paris Hilton.

Kevin Federline

Britney finally dumped him, and lots of people applauded. He was also whitelisted for his "Live Centred" performance at the 2006 Teen Choice Awards.

E-mail the author at markmkabbat_28@yahoo.com

LIFESTYLE

The year that was in fashion

BETSO-INSPIRED polka dots were the rage.

By Bianca Cuisumbing
Correspondent

THE PAST YEAR WAS DECIDEDLY MORE EXperimental, fashion-wise. There were fewer shirts and jeans and more dresses, shorts and skirts. Finally, people were learning to dress up.

One of the most notable trends of 2006 was the return of the '80s. Leggings in all fabrics and colors came back with a vengeance. Pleats, with tunics, dresses, wide belts and boots, leggings were most noticeable. Off-

as shorts were not limited to the home and beach. Women wore Bermuda shorts paired with dressy tops, heels, and lots of accessories to night outs and formal occasions. Skinny jeans also became mainstream, as more people abandoned their trusty old flares for something more hip.

Mid-2006 showed some more old silhouettes, as outlet designs, khaki and smartly tailored pants made their way to store windows. But polka dots proved to be more

THE YEAR IN

There were fewer shirts and jeans and more dresses, shorts, and skirts in 2006

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And with rail get to Divisoria-bargain stores in 20 minutes. While you can be in your office in Ortigas in 6 minutes. Ayala Avenue in 17 minutes or Taft Avenue in 23 minutes through the MRT3. And since both lines link up with the LRT1, you can reach many more places in the metro almost no hassle.

This means you spend less time on the road. And more face-time with family and friends.

Easy link to the Araneta Center.

Manhattan Garden City enjoys direct access to the park playground that's the Araneta Center. Your entry point is a four-level transfer station with a direct walk-in entry ground entrance and four passenger elevators. The station connects you at the third level to the Gateway Mall and to Farm Fishing garden. From there, you're just steps away from Rustan's, SM, Megamall, All Mall, Farmer's Plaza and the iconic Araneta Coliseum.

Manhattan Parkway: Paradise in the Sky.

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BUSY — BY DANIEL SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Participant
6 Bugle, for one
10 Sufficient
14 Author Lofting
15 Sharpen, in Soissons
16 Sandra Dee's "Gidget" setting
17 Bowdoin classmate of Ike REMENT
19 Mass. square
20 Mideast mediator
21 Golf goal
22 Major in maps
23 Dark
24 Actors and entertainers
26 Coin and currency
31 Enemy admiral Yamamoto
32 Manchurian
33 Manchurian, for example
34 Cardinal's Mount
42 Retired org.
43 Woodwind, sometimes
44 Cardinal's gp.
45 Treasure map ingredient
46 Historian Hapgood
47 Hippos
51 Ball (bat's partner)
52 Snowman of the comics
53 Old poem of a sound
56 Confess
57 Cook soup
58 Consumed
59 Kind of dairy
60 Completes dirt

DOWN
1 Newcomer
2 Newfangled
3 Round poetry
4 Yeah!
5 Difficult matter
6 Fix a quality school
7 Audience element
8 Collect together
9 In adjacent to
10 Sec. Rte.
11 Acted as chair
12 White Chapman
13 DEC. heads
18 Old video game maker
25 Daughter's girl
27 Fondue fork, silver Louis
28 Long-time London skipper
29 Describes the weight of a bird
30 Author Kinsey
35 Will companions
36 Cut (from a group)
37 Cried softly
38 Some MVPs
39 Hallmark org.
40 Buffalo Bill
41 Working
46 Hastily say
47 White Wool
48 "Exodus" role
49 Kings' equal
50 Barbeque stru. shun
51 Kissimmee (connection)
54 Ginger Leonard
55 Bk. bundle

By Philip J. Anderson
Portland, OR

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved

HOROSCOPE

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku — by Dave Green

Difficulty Level ★★★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

7	0	6	4	8	3	2	1	5
4	5	3	1	2	9	7	6	8
2	8	1	6	7	5	9	0	4
6	3	2	7	9	8	1	5	4
1	7	9	3	5	4	6	8	2
8	4	5	2	6	1	3	9	7
5	1	8	0	3	7	4	2	6
3	2	4	8	1	6	5	7	9
9	6	7	5	4	2	8	3	1

The year that was in fashion

Homepage D1

popular than stripes, as the former lasted until the last quarter of 2006. Small polka dots were found everywhere, from hair accessories to dresses to belts.

Skull prints also became popular, although not as popular as stripes or polka dots. And so, they weren't gothic. Cutesy and small, skull prints appealed even to girly girls.

Speaking of hair accessories, barrettes made another comeback. '60s-style wide barrettes, scarves and big ribbons were worn not just by grade-school girls, but fashion-savvy women as well. However, after a while, it became disconcerting to see

'80s FASHION comeback: leggings

CUTEST barbarah scores! It's just for kids.

everyone with big ribbons on top of their buns.

Korean fashion also hit the market as several local retailers ripped the busty bustier in their clothes in an effort to make their clothes look more Korean, and therefore, hip. Jumpers, leggings, ruffled tops, dresses and boot prints and colors defined the look, which looked great on Koreans but not always on Filipinos.

If 2006 leaned toward

FILIPINOS couldn't get enough of Korean fashion.

Veronese and Edwardian sensibilities with high necklines and ruffles. 2006 was bolder and more feminine. Purple ruled old Queen Victoria this time, Marie Antoinette, with all her excesses, ruffles and sweeping satin fashion, ruled the court. Linen dresses, corsets and pastel colors in all their feminine glory were snapped up by diehard fashion fanatics. Costume jewelry and ribbons served as accessories.

On the beauty front, more people abandoned their stick-straight hair and decided to go for loose waves and perms. Lash extensions and false lashes became popular, thanks to Japanese makeup brand Shu Uemura, which brought in its Tokyo Lash Bar that showcased lashes made of feathers and studded with rhinestones.

E-mail the author at thestyleman@yahoo.com

NAUTICAL fashion came in mid-2006.

Talkin' tech

By Gabriel H. Mercado
I&A Contributor

From VOIP to YouTube, dazzling inventions and innovations on the tech front kept us all agog this year

CANON ixus i

2006 THE YEAR OF THE APPLE. 32-megapixel cell phones with gigabytes of memory, celebrity bloggers, and channeling our inner Spielberg for the whole world to see.

In the YouTube World Video Time Magazine's Person of the Year is the User who generates content. It's a tribute to YouTube's legions of loyal users who stirred up an honest-to-blog 100 million times and upload 65,000 videos in their one-each-day. With everything from videos of kids goofing off to snippets of TV shows and thousands of amateur productions, YouTube stole hours of our time and captured the imagination of anyone who's ever wondered what it would be like to be a producer, director or set in a video for a mass audience. Andy Warhol must smile, and'll all have our 15 minutes of fame. YouTube gives you 10 minutes (unless you have a paid account). Lucky bitch.

Pro Blogging. Professional bloggers are people living the dream of Web-2 clicking out their thoughts and opinions on their online journals, they're also become so famous that they command advertising rates that compete with news websites. Armed with wit, tons of personality and an often strong point of view, the Pro Blogger is the new celebrity, with marriage that are low than ever only to quit their jobs, but to live quite comfortably from their blogs.

Intel's Core Duo. Unlike in years past where the arrival of a new Intel processor was a much-heralded affair, these days it's an almost copy-of-the-mill occasion. Still, the latest version from Intel gained hype. Once again, the chip is faster and offers more goodies than ever: multi-tasking, but, as usual, expect a replacement cycle to stop approximately mid-2h of next year.

SONY Alpha

NINTENDO Wii

Intel-based Macs and Boot Camp. It's ironic that Intel Mac (initial development stage) Windows on their machine once they adopted Intel processors for all their computers. Apple CEO Steve Jobs was hoping to lure Windows users and allow them to run applications made for Windows, such as many popular games. While controversial at the start, the issue faded into the background—a possible indication that while the ability to run Windows could be made available, it didn't necessarily mean people would do it.

Home consoles and gaming. When the Sony Playstation and, more recently, the Nintendo Wii were sold on their first day, TV news flashed pictures of hundreds of consumers lined up for hours outside stores. The showed what gamers have known for a long time: that gaming has matured into multi-trillion entertainment. So how being the realm of teenage boys, it is now a family-oriented activity, anticipated just as much by moms and dad as well as their kids. While it's great, considering that, at their prices, the Playstation and the Wii are way beyond any kid's allowance.

0.13 megapixel standards. On digicams, the megapixel race seems to have hit a plateau at 8-10 megapixels for both the Prosumer and point-and-shoot categories. The focus now has shifted toward the types of accessories one can use, the quality and adaptability of the lens, the type of memory card, and other traditional factors like build quality, ease-of-use, cost and local after-sales support.

2.2 megapixels and gigabytes of space. While I've tried a 3 megapixel camphone, 2.2 megapixel seems to be just right for this here, with anything bigger becoming more difficult to use for both of a proper lens. This year has seen some of the easiest-to-use models ever. They hand clicks also power new models with more grace than you could ever hope to fill.

Honorable mOB! Time does, we take talking on SMS, 55 Messages and Skype for granted. But the year before, who would have thought we'd ever have access to it? VOIP means the end of the mosquito landline and inflated IDD/MDD rates—a sign that technology could disrupt the ways of the repressive old guard is hugely beneficial ways.

The Great Equalizer in the Digital | Divide

For the Philippines, Technology is the Key for Global Competitiveness

"...With the advent of independent ATM deployment and transaction processing, as well as the progressive expansion of wireless broadband connectivity, there are more revenue opportunities open to rural enterprises than ever before."

Nitz Alcantara, PLDT Corporate Solutions Development Manager, discusses how PLDT VSAT technology allows banks to establish remote ATMs in remote areas during a product demo.

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KIDZ REPUBLIC

December 25 Monday Music Hall 2PM

FUN CLUB CHRISTMAS PARTY

The Filipino Classics

BASIL VALDEZ

December 29 Friday Main Lobby 6PM

December 30 Saturday 10AM onwards

Catch a glimpse of the biggest movie to start the new year, Eragon: the first of the "Inheritance" Trilogy series about a young man named Eragon, who is destined to be a Dragon Rider. With special performances by the country's sought-after bands **Cueshe** and **Cracon**.

WORLD PYRO OLYMPICS

January 5-7 & 12-13, 2007 Esplanade, 7PM

Witness 8 countries battle in the most explosive event this year: the World Pyro Olympics.

December 31 Sun 6PM onwards

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Enjoy daily live musical performances at the North & South wings.

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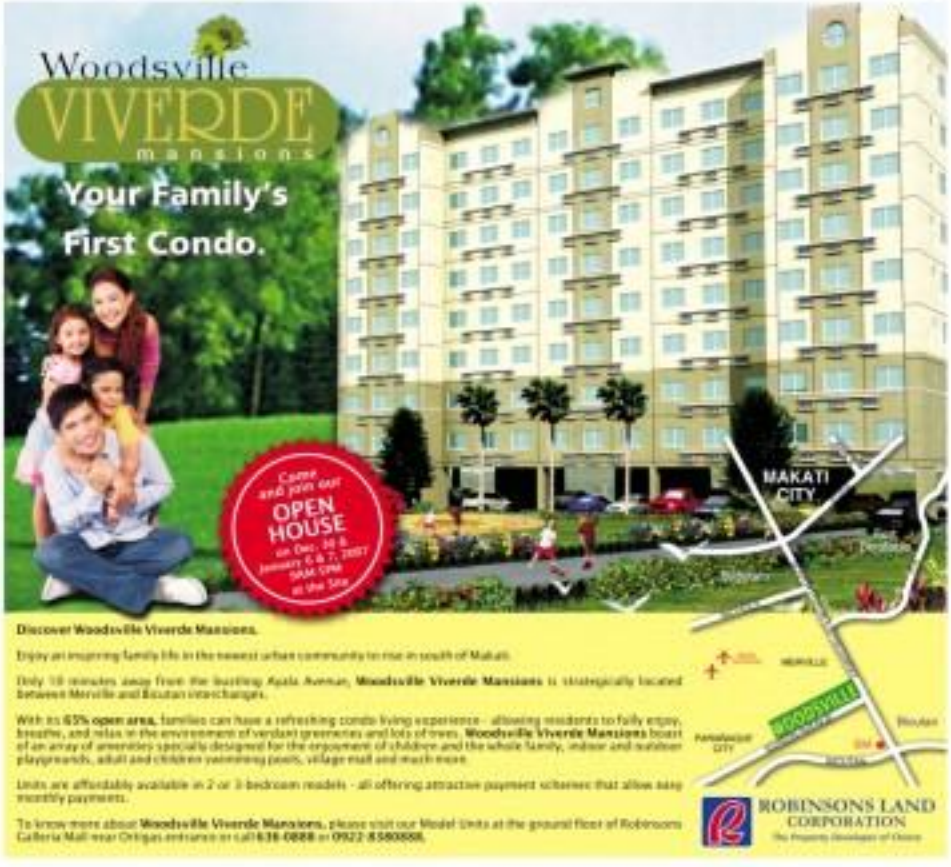
Lolit Bronce G. Velarde

FUN SNAPS FROM 2006

THE COUNTRY's expressive Boy of Tals TV videos in February, when the Christmas 2005 Guyitos were still carried under the spiritual ears in the PDI lobby. Sharing a lengthy checklist, Boy Abunda told us: "I'm not afraid to go home [to Barrio Iggy, Sorsogon, where he was born and raised]. When all of this is done, I will host a talk show with the fish and the carabaos and have a good laugh." The Guyitos Justin Boy in this photo by Ryan Lim) have since left us in PDI donated the carabao mascots shortly after to different schools, some of them in the province.



Christmas in Cebu for Cueshé

By Raquel San Diego Jr.

THE NOSE HAIR CUESHÉ HAS BEEN ON the road since taking off a nationwide tour last September.

The boys have been everywhere from Baguio to Davao but, the holiday season, they hope to visit their home province, Cebu.

"We've been so busy with the tour that we haven't seen our families for the past three months," vocalist Jay Andrieux admits. "Christmas is the best time to catch up with them."

Drummer and lead vocalist Mike Mendoza says his only wish is for "happiness and more blessings for my family." Pressed for specifics, he adds that his biggest dream is to acquire a house and lot.

New car

Guitarist and vocalist Ruben Caballero is eyeing a new car for his wife and their kids.

On top of the Christmas list of lead guitarist Jovan Melo is a five-man satisfied. "I want to give them whatever they want."

Bassist Felix Lobaton hopes to find a new love game—specifically a Sonic Mega—under the tree. After all, he explains, a new gal in his life is awful to their sweet-tooth gigs.

Going easy

Keyboardist Ricardo Morales can't wait to see his two sons. "All I want is for my family to remain together," he says.

According to Sony BMG, the boys have decided to take it easy this month and that their next big gig is set in January 2007.

As the weeks are closer to Cesare and the United States, as well as a major concert in Manila.

The tour has made the boys realize just how hard their career is.

Even though they have yet to go on a full promotional campaign for their latest Sony-BMG album, "Bank in Me," Mendoza notes, "People in the audience know the new songs by heart and they sing along."

Sony-BMG told Inquirer Entertainment that Cueshé's debut ("Hide Enemy, Hide Fall") has hit the double-platinum mark and that the full-on up to four approaching gold status.

"We treat our fans as if they're our friends," Andrieux insists. "We have followers from all age groups—from [our grandmothers] to their sons [grandkids]."

The fans stand by them, Mendoza points out, even if the band has taken a different music direction later in their career.

"It's more laid-back and relaxed," admits Mendoza. Andrieux explains, "It's the perfect music when you're feeling lonely and unwanted, and you're just relaxing and reminiscing in your bedroom."

Upbeat

"That's why we're seriously considering a more upbeat sound for our third album," says Mendoza.

So, fans, they've not going there....

"It's more like Jagat Boy will sweat," Andrieux quips. "Or Lunch Meats."

NOT 1, NOT 2, BUT 14 OF YOUR FAVOURITE CARTOON NETWORK CHARACTERS ARE COMING TO TOWN.
Watch Dee Dee and Dexter from Dexter's Laboratory, Bubbles, Blossom, Buttercup and Mojo Jojo from The Powerpuff Girls, Bloomguard, Mac, Wilt Eduardo and Coco from Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends, Ami and Yumi from Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi all performing live!
SPECIAL CHRISTMAS OFFER: UPPER BOX B TICKETS NOW FOR ONLY P680 P100 EACH. VALID WHILE SUPPLY LASTS!

SHOW SCHEDULE

Dec. 29	4:00 pm	7:30 pm
Dec. 30	4:00 pm	7:30 pm
Dec. 31	No Show	
Jan. 1	4:00 pm	7:30 pm
Jan. 2	1:00 pm	4:00 pm
Jan. 3	7:30 pm	

Due to typhoon, there was a shipment delay. The Dec. 29 show is cancelled but we added a 1pm show on Jan. 2, 2007. Ticket buyers are requested to rebook their tickets to the other shows as per the schedule above. Those who will be inconvenienced by such a change, are requested to claim for refund at the Ticketnet office, Araneta Coliseum. Thank you.

CHEER FACTOR

SEOUL CITY—If you look the glance of Miss Universe, but diarrhea days Miss Manila Beauty pageant for pond, take stock up for it inherent and bronze.

On Friday, 10 sea workers unfurled on a makeshift stage in Mawed, a poor neighborhood fi- more for pandemics, showing off homemade dresses in a pageant organized by the provincial hospital group. Meet Miguel.

Press surged from USSR to US$100, but participants said the bigger reward was a lift in their self-esteem. AP

glorietta · GREENBELT · ELWOK · AYALA CENTER CEBU · MARKET! MARKET! · Ayala Malls

AT THE CINEMAS

G1	1 MAGIC, BATTLE & ROLL 2	2 [illegible]	3 ZEN ZEN ZAFURMAN	4 LEGALIS
G4	1 HANAL, BABAE, KABALO	2 LEGALIS	3? TATLONG BARAHA	
	4 MATAHOT KA SA KARIMA	5 MANO PO 5	6 SUPER HOYPI	7 SNAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2
GB1	1 ZEN ZEN ZAFURMAN		2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3	
GB3	1? SUPER HOYPI		2? MANO PO 5	
	3 MATAHOT KA SA KARIMA	4 TATLONG BARAHA	5 HANAL, BABAE, KABALO	
ATC	1? MATAHOT KA SA KARIMA		2 MANO PO 5	
	3 SUPER HOYPI	4 ENTENG KABISOTE 3	5 SNAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2	
ACC	1 SUPER HOYPI	2 SNAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2	3 ENTENG KABISOTE 3	4 MATAHOT KA SA KARIMA
M2	1 SNAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2		2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3	
	3 SUPER HOYPI	4 MANO PO 5	5 ZEN ZEN ZAFURMAN	

At the Activity Center

GLORIETTA	TOWN
Santa Klaus! December 23 to 26, 2006	Jeruan Rabbit! December 11 to 22, 2006
AYALA CENTER CEBU	MARKET! MARKET!
Bayanihan Learning Center Christmas Presentation December 27, 2006	Holiday Challenge, Grand Finals December 16, 2006

GREENBELT — Holiday Harmonies with the Philippine Madrigal Singers, December 22, 2006

Onstage — ONSTAGE - The perfect spot for concerts, stage plays & corporate events is now accepting bookings for May to July 2007. For bookings, pls. call Lissa at 757-3862 or Lito at 757-3862

Ayala MUSEUM — 19th - 20th Century Philippine Art from Ayala Museum Collection. Re-opens until January 2007. For inquiries, please call 757-7117 loc 21 or visit www.ayalamuseum.org

GREENBELT Onstage
The perfect spot for concerts, stage plays and corporate events is now accepting bookings for May to July 2007
For bookings, pls. call Lissa at 757-3862 or Lito at 757-3862.

Christmas Festival of Choirs
Glorietta 4 Park
6 to 7pm
November 11
College of the Immaculate Conception Chorale
November 18
Manila Chamber Singers
November 25
Nova Consortbande Manila
December 2
Ateneo de Manila College Glee Club
December 9
Ateneo Boys Choir
December 16
Philippine Normal University Chorale
December 23
University of the East Chorale
December 30
Adventist University of the Philippines Chorale

'Innocent voices'

More than 300,000 children presently serve to armies in over 50 countries.

Director Luis Mandoki underscores the severity of this global problem in "Innocent Voices," the poignant tale of Chava (Carlos Padilla), an 11-year-old Salvadorean boy who suddenly becomes the "man of the house" after his father abandons the family in the middle of a civil war.

The movie will be shown across cinemas by an Iyaka Mallo Cinemas (Glorietta 4 and Greenbelt 2).

Survival stories

The acclaimed series "I Shouldn't Be Alive" enters its second season on Discovery Channel, showcasing the world's most incredible survival stories.

Premiering every Monday at 10 p.m., the show presents the following episodes:

"Frozen at 28,000 feet," Feb. 12; "Trapped Under the Ice," Feb. 19; "Into the Heart of Darkness," Feb. 26; "Blood in the Water," March 5; "Dive Into Danger," March 12; and "Nightmare Canyon," March 19.

'ER'

Medical series

Hallmark Channel will feature the season of medical personnel assigned in the emergency room of a fictional Chicago county hospital in Michael Crichton's "ER."

The pilot telecast is a two-hour movie showing on Jan. 1. The rest of season one episodes will be shown Monday to Friday, 8 p.m.

Another medical series, this time centering on the workings of the brain, will air every Monday starting Jan. 12, 8 p.m.

"3 Lbs." refers to the human brain's weight.

The series stars Stanley Tucci as Dr. Doug Ramsen, a top notch neurosurgeon whose long held power struggle will be challenged by the orthodox approach of his opponents, Dr. Jonathan Singer (Heath Freeman).

'Sinenomia'

GMA-7 will soon serialize the well-loved movies—"Sisa: Inawang ang Unang Halik," "Sinenomia Mo," "Nang Mahaw Mas ang Iba," and "Gusto Kubitan ang Mundo."

Under the umbrella title "Sinenomia," the movies to be released by Vivo Films will be turned by the network into TV drama through its pool of writers.

SM CINEMA
movietime SHOWTIME
Your life as a movie

SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 8

From the scream-worthy "Shake, Rattle & Roll" series comes another trilogy:

"139" - a group of party organizers arrange a children's party at the 139th floor of a new condominium that suddenly sets off a power jam.

"Tayo" - a naughty kid named Bong's encounters that from one corpse to a vampire. And no one believes him, even!

"LRT" - passengers find themselves stranded in the station and soon after, a horrifying creature carrying out of nowhere to hell bent on chasing them.

movietime PROMO

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GALLERIA

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3 • TIXE	6 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
2 KASALI, KASAL, KASALO	7 MANO PO 5
3 LIGALIG	8 SUPER NOYPI
4 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH	9 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
5 TATLONG BARAHA	10 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL 8

ERMITA

1 KASALI, KASAL, KASALO	
2 LIGALIG	6 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
3 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH	6 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
4 TATLONG BARAHA	7 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL 8

METRO EAST

1 KASALI, KASAL, KASALO	6 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
2 LIGALIG	6 MANO PO 5
3 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH	7 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
4 TATLONG BARAHA	8 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL 8

NOVALICHES

1 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL 8	5 TATLONG BARAHA
2 SUPER NOYPI	6 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
3 MANO PO 5	7 LIGALIG
4 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA	8 KASALI, KASAL, KASALO

CITISQUARE MALABON | **PIONEER**

1 SUPER NOYPI	1 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL 8
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 RESERVE	3 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
4 RESERVE	4 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH

Watch and Win an ALL-YEAR-ROUND Robinsons Movieworld Cinema Card!!!

Robinsons Movieworld will give away one (1) cinema card to the 100 cash prize winners of the "Cash na Pabiliha" raffle promo, provided that they have watched at least 3 cinema films at any Robinsons Movieworld Branch.

PROMO PERIOD
December 25, 2006 to January 04, 2007

STA. ROSA

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3	
2 KASALI, KASAL, KASALO	
3 MANO PO 5	
4 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL 8	
5 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH	

LIPA

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3	
2 KASALI, KASAL, KASALO	
3 MANO PO 5	
4 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL 8	
5 SUPER NOYPI	

DASMARINAS

1 MANO PO 5	
2 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL 8	
3 SUPER NOYPI	
4 KASALI, KASAL, KASALO	

ANGELES

1 MANO PO 5	
2 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL 8	
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 3	
4 KASALI, KASAL, KASALO	

IMUS

1 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL	
2 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA	
3 TATLONG BARAHA	
4 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH	
5 LIGALIG	
6 KASALI, KASAL, KASALO	

STARMILLS

1 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL 8	
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3	
3 SUPER NOYPI	
4 MANO PO 5	
5 LIGALIG	
6 KASALI, KASAL, KASALO	

BACOLOD

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3	
2 KASALI, KASAL, KASALO	
3 MANO PO 5	
4 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL 8	
5 SUPER NOYPI	
6 THE NATIVITY STORY	

ILOILO

1 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH	
2 TATLONG BARAHA	
3 MANO PO 5	
4 SUPER NOYPI	
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 3	
6 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL 8	

The Perfect Gift All Year Round

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Get special discounts for volume purchases!

KID FIT

'Edutainment' at new kiddie hangout

DESIRED AS A PLACE "WHERE EDUglow of fun come alive," Kids Republic play centre offers a new concept called "edutainment"—a combination of education and entertainment.

Children can enjoy a wide variety of learning experiences as well as classes in dance and the arts in the fabulous activity center located at the second floor of the South Wing of the SM Mall of Asia.

The themed jungle playground with tubes, slides, air cement cushion, mazes, ball pools and foldable ramplines is open daily from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

On every purchase at Mother Ledge at participating McDonald's branches, get a discount of up to P500 on every P500 net purchase at participating Fortune Makers. See packers and stores for details. Promo runs from June 1 to December 31, 2006. For BIR ATP Permit No. 4141, Series of 2006.

ENTERTAINMENT

A FEW NIGHTS ago, J.K. Rowling, left, had "an epic dream" in which she was, simultaneously, Harry and the narrator

WOULD Harry have a grisly demise? How will it all end? The author is not giving more than a simple promise to finish the new book.

Pottermania: The last book

LONDON—BRITISH AUTHOR J.K. Rowling revealed on Thursday that the long-awaited seventh and final book in her wizard saga will be called "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows," sparking the next phase of Pottermania.

Fans of the series that has already sold an estimated 300 million copies worldwide were kept guessing with the publication date set at—although that did not stop over 10 bookseller from starting to take reservations.

The intriguing and ominous title had Potter aficionados puzzling over what might happen to the bespectacled hero.

"Will a favorite character die? Could Harry himself face a grisly demise? How will it all end?" asked Sam Harrison, children's buyer at the British book chain Waterstone's.

"But surely the question all Potter fans will want answering as soon as possible is—when can they get their hands on a copy?"

Rowling, whose creation has turned her into one of the world's richest and most venerable authors, revealed on her website this week, "You have nothing serious (that hasn't been planned), in some cases, for a dozen years or even more. I am alternately elated and nervous right. I both want, and don't want, to finish this book (don't worry I will)."

She said in the diary entry on her official website (www.jkrowling.com) that Potter had now inspired his own fans' dreams.

"In recent years, people have asked me whether I ever dream that I am 'in Harry's world,'" Rowling wrote. "The answer was 'no' until a few nights ago when I had an epic dream involving me, unrealistically, Harry and the narrator."

But she gave no clues as to what will happen at the end of the upcoming book, amid speculation that some of the characters, possibly Harry himself, will die.

Rowling's last novel, "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince," was her most successful book to date (UK, she said), selling 6.9 million copies in the first 24 hours.

But despite uncertainty over the publication date, book retailer Borders said it had started taking reservations for the seventh book on Dec. 8 and on Thursday e-mailed a link to its customers to sign up for e-mail notification when the book can be reserved online.

"Anticipation for this book has been building since the sixth book was released in 2005," said Borders senior vice president Linda Jones in a statement. "We are sensing real excitement from our customers."

Reuters

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Whoa, that girl Jennifer Hudson

REVIEW

MOVIE—THE TITLE OF THE film is "Dreamgirls" but it could have been called "Lyrics In Boxes." For every "American Idol" contestant Jennifer Hudson nailed away each this big, splashy sketches of a pained, biased on the 1981 Broadway musical, even before performing her plaintive, show-stopping number "And I Am Telling You I'm Not Going."

Writer-director Bill Condon has crafted an enormously entertaining, technically triumphant film in following the rise of a Supremes-style Motown trio—played by Hudson, fleetwood Knowles and Anika Noni Rose—the music, choreography, costumes, lighting and make-up are all superb. The editing is exceptionally clean, moving fluidly.

"Dreamgirls" is more successful than other rewarded stage productions that have come to the screen recently—"The Phantom of the Opera," "Rent" and "The Producers," they're—which maintained the aura of their content and seemed too overstrained, too dunky.

Yet the cooking is so stylized it'll under your heart spin. And the whole thing can be hard to take seriously—especially "And I Am Telling You I'm Not Going" which, in the past 25 years, has become a favorite drug queen anthem.

Effion Hudson does real up-going, though, the movie goes with her. And it pretty right back up again when she returns. With her huge voice and fierce presence she proves herself a worthy successor to Jennifer Holliday, who originated the role of Effie White, lead singer of the Dreamettes.

Sufficiently classy

Jamie Foxx is sufficiently classy as the group's two-timing manager, ran sobriquet Curtis Taylor, with Little Stephen Burrows as "Loving Day Night Live" James Brown impression as Effie's ex-machine dress, by the by.

Curtis takes over the trio after seeing Cheyenne Jones in an amateur night and promptly begins reinventing the lady's R&B, while dropping her guard and lets herself fall in love with him. The intentionally life-awakening Jimmy meanwhile, sets his sights on the small, fresh sets of the duets, Rosie Lovell, as they all begin touring and recording together, while not worrying in Jimmy's backstage fingers.

But it doesn't take long for Curtis to move the Dreamettes out from behind. Jimmy small sets sweet steps, screaming from the Stones and making Knowles' angelic voice and lighter-skinned than Effie—the kind singer.

Sam Cowell

Jennie authors Effie is Curtis' best, as well, marking a 40 when weak Effie quickly with the rest of the group becomes an afterthought, only successful with Effie singer Michelle Shawn Lovell. And as

JENNIFER HUDSON

Dream becomes the most visible member of the trio it's hard to tell whether Curtis is in love with the woman or merely dependent on her to get a product.

While Knowles' voice is as strong as Hudson's richer own physique may she still needs to beef up in the acting department.

Happily, however, slips deep for the first time in a long time. The solid performances tell us Hudson off stage, making it increasingly difficult to get from on stage.

But this is Hudson's movie all the way. And by the song who was in who sang "American Idol" the movie she was on Burnt Brown records—she turned out more than that, with or without Simon Cowell's help. —Christy Lemire, AP

Walter Mart

PLARIDEL CINEMAS
Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo
Lipstik
Tatlong Baraha
Shake, Rattle & Roll - 8
Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo
Enteng Kabisote - 3

GALAXIA CINEMAS
Shake, Rattle & Roll - 8
Enteng Kabisote - 3
Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo
Shake, Rattle & Roll - 8
Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo
Enteng Kabisote - 3

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ANG TANGING HERO NG BAYAN
ALL ABOARD ALL AGES ADMITTED
VIC SOTTO KRISTINE HERMOSA
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6:00 PM / Turner Circle
FREE ADMISSION

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SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL 8
SUPERNOVA
SANDOMINO 3
SATTLE BARAHA PO13

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PREMIERE THEATRE
Catch the Cineplex Special

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THE MOST AWAITED HORROR MOVIE OF THE YEAR
MAG-INGAT...MAKIRAMDAM...MATAKOT
MTRCB PG-13
RICA PERALEJO ANGELICA PANGANIBAN
and GRETCHEN BARRETTO
TANYA GARCIA BIANCA KING and ANA CAPRI
MATAKOT KA SA
KARMA

NOW SHOWING
LITO LAPID
MARK LAPID
MAYNARD LAPID
TATLONG BARAHA

GREENHILLS CINEMAS
THEATRE MALL
PROMENADE

Quantity over quality in ABS-CBN holiday special

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

REVIEWING ABS-CBN's Christmas special, "Bitoy/Roley and Bodjo" from now on known here simply as "Bitoy," I'm hoping to put a Yuletide glow from its musical treats. We did enjoy some of its tuneful production numbers, but others bombed because some of the participants simply didn't know how to sing.

Among the top offenders were the non-singing "runners-on" who figured in a "game" secondary medley in which one "singer's" last word became the next performer's first statement.

At first, the non-singing hams tried to get by with the "humor" resulting from their tuneless lack of musical ability. But, there were so many of them that the "joke" soon became unbearable.

Worse, some "real-singers" seemed to think that they were really quite humorous (albeit histrionic exaggerated) singers, as they "sang" not as intended, but, prompted by seamless cues from hopefully no less-trained to resonant sounds.

Thank goodness, younger talents like Yeng Konstantino and Sarah Geronimo and Aiyver Cruz acquitted themselves well in a long and demanding medley. There's hope for local show biz yet.

Also, another unexpected bonus was the number featuring some of the country's best male contributor talents. The problem wasn't that they didn't sing well, but that they were much too competitive for comfort. They tried to top each other with increasingly higher notes, so the pure cheese ranged from the tasteless and visual enough.

The special's "kiddie medley" was fun and further bolstered our optimism about the future of Philippine entertainment. But the child performers that "graduating" emcee never reappeared by their parents, parents and sometimes not adult performing styles.

Child talents and their mentors should keep reminding themselves that "kiddie" performers should enjoy their brief years of fame and focus on their sense of fun and creative, laughing listeners and viewers with the freshness and honesty of youth.

The special's final performance

The show could also have had more of a Christmas feeling to it

was dramatic because it was given as a "Showcase" to let that respected actress/singer/dancer "dance" the secondary choir's signature "Broadway-ized" routine—with embarrassing results.

We know that the "fans" were treated to those that the entertainers showed off their fancy pinches and he "just folks," but the effect was less warm than offputting.

Summing up, we appreciate ABS-CBN's impressive investment in terms of manpower, talent, time and budget to make its Christmas special a spectacular Yuletide treat.

But it stood by spending quantity over quality with production numbers that seemed lovely scores of talents, sometimes with each artiste performing only one or two lines to sing.

The show could also have had more of a Christmas feeling to it, plus a dearer focus on Filipino carols, as suggested by the special's title.

'Transit'

Spunge Cola's newly released "Transit" album has been certified gold. The album has spawned the hit single "Bebe," the theme of the TV drama series, "The Adventures of Pedro Penduko."

'A Life Among Whales'

The National Geographic Channel premieres "A Life Among Whales" at 10 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 31.

The documentary by biologist Roger Payne focuses on a group of mammals in dire need of protection against hunting and pollution.

'The Girl Who Lives in the Dark'

On Discovery Channel, "The Girl Who Lives in the Dark" premieres at 9 p.m. on Jan. 6. The medical documentary introduces viewers to Nhu Lan Vang, a 4-year-old girl from rural Chad, who suffers from a rare genetic disorder that makes her skin unable to repair itself after exposure to UV light.

Watch and Win an ALL-YEAR-ROUND Robinsons Movieworld Cinema Card!!!

Robinsons Movieworld will give away one (1) cinema card to the 100 cash prize winners of the "Cash sa Pelikula" raffle promo provided that they have watched at least 3 movies at any Robinsons Movieworld Branch.

PROMO PERIOD:
December 22, 2006 to January 02, 2007

See Promo Bulletin for more details

See BTR-NCR Permit #0017, Series of 2006

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Newport CINEPLEX

MAGIC MAGIC MAGIC	SUPER NOYPI	ENTENG KABOOSH 3
LIGALIG	ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH	SHAKE BATTLE & ROLL
MISSING SABANA	MANO PO 5	MAGIC SA SA CABIN

RESERVED

MALL 5

1 MAGIC, MAGIC, MAGIC	2 LIGALIG	3 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
4 SUPER NOYPI	5 ENTENG KABOOSH 3	

For ticket inquiries please call TicketNet at 911 5555 or log on to www.cinemas.com.ph

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Meet & greet the stars of

MANO PO 5

ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH

SHAKE RATTLE AND ROLL 8

SUPER NOYPI

December 27, 2006
Wednesday, 6:00 PM
Glorietta Activity Center

Reserved seats for the first 200 moviegoers who will present their MANO PO 5, ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH, SHAKE RATTLE AND ROLL 8 & SUPER NOYPI movie tickets purchased from any Ayala Malls Cinemas on December 27, 2006.

Rated "A" by Cinema Evaluation Board

Suitable for 13 years of age and up

CESAR MONTANO

MMTA
METRO MANILA THEATERS ASSOCIATION

MOVIE GUIDE

NOW SHOWING

Italy's DJ Benny Benassi, live in Manila

KITE INTO A SLICE OF PARTY heaven as you greet the New Year. Italian DJ Benny Benassi, who conquered the dance floors worldwide with his house anthem "Satisfaction," is set to take Manila by storm. He spins at the PICC Forum on Friday, Dec. 29, in his trademark style—electric, house-rock, "filmy" and cool. Ranked no. 13 in Beatfilt.com, Benassi, born in Milan in 1967, also works as a producer with his cousin Alle Benassi, a musician and arranger at Off Limits, in Virgilio Emilio, today the universally successful production unit run by Larry Pignagnelli.

DJ BENASSI

In 2005, Benny was No. 1 in the Top 100 dance tracks on the Billboard of Sound Investor ratio. He won DJ Mag Year of the Year in UK. Revelation of the Year in the Italian Dance Music Awards, Dance Revelation of the Year in the Danish Music Awards, and was nominated for Sensational Revelation of the Year in the MK2 Awards in France.

The following year, Benny won the Best Video Award at Eurocrime, Miami, was nominated 19 Elle highest new artist in the DJ Mag Favourite DJ Poll Top 100, and received the European Border Breakers Award for dispositive, the Italian album that sold over in all Europe.

Call 719-1311 to 13 or 09920-954-4244.

SHOW TIME

BLACK EYED PEAS

Global party

Nokia announces the world's biggest New Year's Eve celebration in five party capitals of the world.

The Black Eyed Peas and Sean Paul are among the crème de l'international actors who will begin countdown to "Nokia New Year's Eve" on Dec. 31.

The event will gather revelers from Hong Kong to Rio de Janeiro. Thousands are expected in person can experience the party via television or the Internet. To celebrate this unique celebration, Nokia has enlisted the services of Harvey Goldsmith OBE, producer of Live Aid and Live8.

Nokia New Year's Eve will travel from east to west, starting in Hong Kong's Ocean Terminal, followed by Mumbai's Andheri Sunkissed, the Rajasthan Gate in Berlin, Ipanema Beach in Rio de Janeiro, concluding off in New York.

Broadcast material available: http://www.nokia.com/A41656

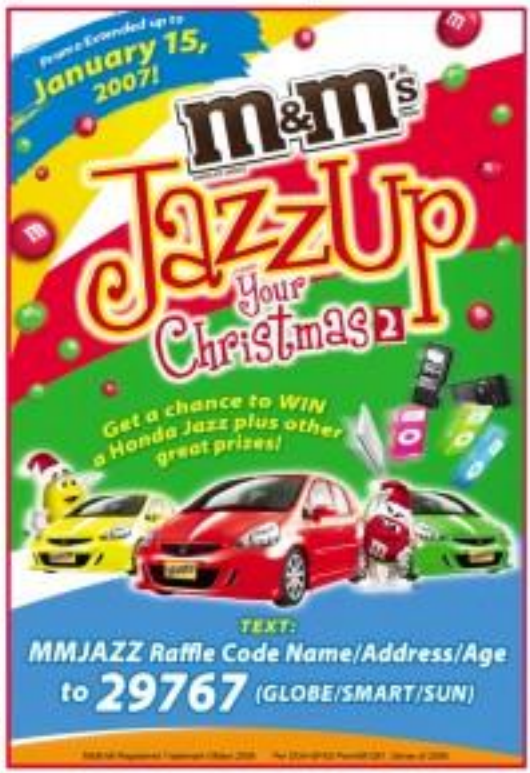
Hyatt countdown

At Hyatt Regency Manila's Lobby Lounge, revelers will bid 2006 goodbye to the swinging beats of the band's resident offbeats band, Rhythm & Blues.

The New Year's Eve celebration starts at 10:30 p.m. The Rhythm & Blues are lead vocalist Anne Bongolo, bass guitarist Anna Tordecilla, lead guitarist and vocalist Edson Manalaysay, keyboardist Love Guevarra, rhythm guitarist Lolo Enriquez and drummers Anne Bonifacio, Sushi Singer Marlyn Garcia is a featured performer.

Minimum consumable charge is Php1,000++ per person. Call 893-1234 loc. 8078.

RHYTHM & BLUES



'Cartoonival!'

Some of the world's best-loved cartoon characters invade the local scene for a week of entertainment, laughter and fun in "Cartoonival! Cartoon Network Live!" from Dec. 29 to Jan. 3 at the Araneta Coliseum in Cubao, Quezon City.

Tickets are at P1,500, P1,250, P950 and P550. Call 911-3333.

Today

Up Bharata Dawn at "70s Bistro, Ayanna, QC.

Tomorrow

Entertainment Reveal at "70s Bistro, Ayanna, QC.

Dec. 29

Reggae Maraya at "70s Bistro, Ayanna, QC.

Dec. 30

The Aces at "70s Bistro, Ayanna, QC.

Jan. 7

Piano prodigy Oliver Sobrejas at UP Abelardo Hall, 4 p.m. Call 724-0705.

Jan. 12

The Letterman at the Ayanna Ediberum, 8 p.m.

Jan. 13

The Letterman at Clark Expo in Pampanga, 8 p.m.

Jan. 14

The Letterman at St. Scholastica's Academy (Subic), 8 p.m.

Oliver Sobrejas at UP Abelardo Hall, 4 p.m. Call 724-0705.